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# THE POETRY OF ROBERT FROST

EDITED BY
EDWARD CONNERY LATHEM



JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON

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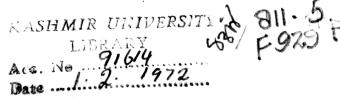
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#### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book contains those poems which, on documentary and other evidence, it is believed Robert Frost himself would have chosen to represent his poetic achievement had he lived to supervise a comprehensive edition of his work. He left at his death in 1963 no unpublished, completed poems that there is definite reason to believe he would have included in such a collection as this. The time will come for a variorum or definitive edition in which it will be appropriate to print every scrap of verse that can be attributed to Frost, but the materials are not yet adequately in hand. The current need is for a convenient volume both for general readers and scholars, scrupulously edited for textual accuracy. It is with special pride in a long association with the poet and his work that the publisher now presents The Poetry of Robert Frost.

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#### THE POETRY OF ROBERT FROST



PHOTOGRAPH BY CLARA E. SIPPRELL

#### THE PASTURE

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring; I'll only stop to rake the leaves away (And wait to watch the water clear, I may): I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

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### A Boy's Will

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#### INTO MY OWN

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One of my wishes is that those dark trees, So old and firm they scarcely show the breeze, Were not, as 'twere, the merest mask of gloom, But stretched away unto the edge of doom.

I should not be withheld but that some day Into their vastness I should steal away, Fearless of ever finding open land, Or highway where the slow wheel pours the sand.

I do not see why I should e'er turn back, Or those should not set forth upon my track To overtake me, who should miss me here And long to know if still I held them dear.

They would not find me changed from him they knew— Only more sure of all I thought was true.

#### **GHOST HOUSE**

I dwell in a lonely house I know
That vanished many a summer ago,
And left no trace but the cellar walls,
And a cellar in which the daylight falls
And the purple-stemmed wild raspberries grow.

O'er ruined fences the grapevines shield The woods come back to the mowing field; The orchard tree has grown one copse

Of new wood and old where the woodpecker chops; The footpath down to the well is healed.	10
I dwell with a strangely aching heart In that vanished abode there far apart On that disused and forgotten road That has no dust-bath now for the toad. Night comes; the black bats tumble and dart;	15
The whippoorwill is coming to shout And hush and cluck and flutter about: I hear him begin far enough away Full many a time to say his say Before he arrives to say it out.	20
It is under the small, dim, summer star.  I know not who these mute folk are Who share the unlit place with me— Those stones out under the low-limbed tree Doubtless bear names that the mosses mar.	25
They are tireless folk, but slow and sad— Though two, close-keeping, are lass and lad— With none among them that ever sings, And yet, in view of how many things, As sweet companions as might be had.	30
MY NOVEMBER GUEST	
My Sorrow, when she's here with me, Thinks these dark days of autumn rain Are beautiful as days can be; She loves the bare, the withered tree;	
She walks the sodden pasture lane	

Her pleasure will not let me stay.  She talks and I am fain to list: She's glad the birds are gone away, She's glad her simple worsted gray Is silver now with clinging mist.	10
The desolate, deserted trees, The faded earth, the heavy sky, The beauties she so truly sees, She thinks I have no eye for these, And vexes me for reason why.	15
Not yesterday I learned to know The love of bare November days Before the coming of the snow, But it were vain to tell her so, And they are better for her praise.	20
LOVE AND A QUESTION	
A Stranger came to the door at eve, And he spoke the bridegroom fair. He bore a green-white stick in his hand, And, for all burden, care. He asked with the eyes more than the lips For a shelter for the night, And he turned and looked at the road afar Without a window light.	5
The bridegroom came forth into the porch With, "Let us look at the sky, And question what of the night to be, Stranger, you and I." The woodbine leaves littered the yard.	10

Autumn, yes, winter was in the wind; "Stranger, I wish I knew."	15
Within, the bride in the dusk alone Bent over the open fire, Her face rose-red with the glowing coal And the thought of the heart's desire. The bridegroom looked at the weary road, Yet saw but her within, And wished her heart in a case of gold And pinned with a silver pin.	20
The bridegroom thought it little to give A dole of bread, a purse, A heartfelt prayer for the poor of God, Or for the rich a curse; But whether or not a man was asked To mar the love of two By harboring woe in the bridal house, The bridegroom wished he knew.	25 30
A LATE WALK	
When I go up through the mowing field, The headless aftermath, Smooth-laid like thatch with the heavy dew, Half closes the garden path.	
And when I come to the garden ground,	5

The woodbine berries were blue.

Up from the tangle of withered weeds

The whir of sober birds

Is sadder than any words.

A tree beside the wall stands bare, But a leaf that lingered brown, Disturbed, I doubt not, by my thought, Comes softly rattling down.	10
I end not far from my going forth, By picking the faded blue Of the last remaining aster flower To carry again to you.	15
STARS	
How countlessly they congregate O'er our tumultuous snow, Which flows in shapes as tall as trees When wintry winds do blow!—	
As if with keenness for our fate, Our faltering few steps on To white rest, and a place of rest Invisible at dawn—	5
And yet with neither love nor hate, Those stars like some snow-white Minerva's snow-white marble eyes Without the gift of sight.	10
STORM FEAR	
When the wind works against us in the dark, And pelts with snow The lower-chamber window on the east, And whispers with a sort of stifled bark, The beast,	5

"Come out! Come out!"—

It costs no inward struggle not to go,
Ah, no!

I count our strength,
Two and a child,
Those of us not asleep subdued to mark
How the cold creeps as the fire dies at length—
How drifts are piled,
Dooryard and road ungraded,
Till even the comforting barn grows far away,
And my heart owns a doubt
Whether 'tis in us to arise with day
And save ourselves unaided.

#### WIND AND WINDOW FLOWER

Lovers, forget your love,
And list to the love of these,
She a window flower,
And he a winter breeze.

When the frosty window veil
Was melted down at noon,
And the caged yellow bird
Hung over her in tune,

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He marked her through the pane, He could not help but mark, And only passed her by To come again at dark.

He was a winter wind, Concerned with ice and snow,

Dead weeds and unmated birds, And little of love could know.	15
But he sighed upon the sill, He gave the sash a shake, As witness all within Who lay that night awake.	20
Perchance he half prevailed To win her for the flight From the firelit looking-glass And warm stove-window light.	
But the flower leaned aside And thought of naught to say, And morning found the breeze A hundred miles away.	25
TO THE THAWING WIND	
Come with rain, O loud Southwester! Bring the singer, bring the nester; Give the buried flower a dream;	
Make the settled snowbank steam; Find the brown beneath the white; But whate'er you do tonight, Bathe my window, make it flow,	5
Melt it as the ice will go; Melt the glass and leave the sticks Like a hermit's crucifix;	10
Burst into my narrow stall; Swing the picture on the wall;	

Run the rattling pages o'er;

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#### A PRAYER IN SPRING

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers today; And give us not to think so far away As the uncertain harvest; keep us here All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white, Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night; And make us happy in the happy bees, The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird That suddenly above the bees is heard, The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill, And off a blossom in mid-air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love, The which it is reserved for God above To sanctify to what far ends He will, But which it only needs that we fulfill.

#### FLOWER-GATHERING

I left you in the morning,
And in the morning glow
You walked a way beside me
To make me sad to go.
Do you know me in the gloaming,

Gaunt and dusty gray with roaming? Are you dumb because you know me not, Or dumb because you know?	
All for me? And not a question For the faded flowers gay That could take me from beside you For the ages of a day? They are yours, and be the measure Of their worth for you to treasure,	10
The measure of the little while	15
That I've been long away.	
ROSE POGONIAS A saturated meadow,	
Sun-shaped and jewel-small, A circle scarcely wider Than the trees around were tall; Where winds were quite excluded, And the air was stifling sweet With the breath of many flowers— A temple of the heat.	5
There we bowed us in the burning, As the sun's right worship is, To pick where none could miss them A thousand orchises; For though the grass was scattered,	10
Yet every second spear Seemed tipped with wings of color That tinged the atmosphere.	15

We raised a simple prayer
Before we left the spot,
That in the general mowing
That place might be forgot;
Or if not all so favored,
Obtain such grace of hours
That none should mow the grass there
While so confused with flowers.

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#### WAITING

# Afield at dusk

What things for dream there are when specter-like, Moving among tall haycocks lightly piled, I enter alone upon the stubble field, From which the laborers' voices late have died, And in the antiphony of afterglow And rising full moon, sit me down Upon the full moon's side of the first haycock And lose myself amid so many alike.

I dream upon the opposing lights of the hour, Preventing shadow until the moon prevail; I dream upon the nighthawks peopling heaven, Each circling each with vague unearthly cry, Or plunging headlong with fierce twang afar; And on the bat's mute antics, who would seem Dimly to have made out my secret place, Only to lose it when he pirouettes, And seek it endlessly with purblind haste; On the last swallow's sweep; and on the rasp In the abyss of odor and rustle at my back, That, silenced by my advent, finds once more,

After an interval, his instrument, And tries once—twice—and thrice if I be there; And on the worn book of old-golden song I brought not here to read, it seems, but hold And freshen in this air of withering sweetness; But on the memory of one absent, most, For whom these lines when they shall greet her eye.	
IN A VALE	
When I was young, we dwelt in a vale By a misty fen that rang all night, And thus it was the maidens pale I knew so well, whose garments trail Across the reeds to a window light.	5
The fen had every kind of bloom, And for every kind there was a face, And a voice that has sounded in my room Across the sill from the outer gloom. Each came singly unto her place,	10
But all came every night with the mist; And often they brought so much to say Of things of moment to which, they wist, One so lonely was fain to list, That the stars were almost faded away	15
Before the last went, heavy with dew	

Before the last went, heavy with dew,
Back to the place from which she came—
Where the bird was before it flew,
Where the flower was before it grew,
Where bird and flower were one and the same.

And thus it is I know so well

Why the flower has odor, the bird has song.
You have only to ask me, and I can tell.
No, not vainly there did I dwell,

Nor vainly listen all the night long.

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#### A DREAM PANG

I had withdrawn in forest, and my song
Was swallowed up in leaves that blew alway;
And to the forest edge you came one day
(This was my dream) and looked and pondered long,
But did not enter, though the wish was strong:
You shook your pensive head as who should say,
"I dare not—too far in his footsteps stray—
He must seek me would he undo the wrong."

Not far, but near, I stood and saw it all, Behind low boughs the trees let down outside; And the sweet pang it cost me not to call And tell you that I saw does still abide. But 'tis not true that thus I dwelt aloof, For the wood wakes, and you are here for proof.

# IN NEGLECT

They leave us so to the way we took,

As two in whom they were proved mistaken,
That we sit sometimes in the wayside nook,
With mischievous, vagrant, seraphic look,
And try if we cannot feel forsaken.

# REVELATION

We make ourselves a place apart Behind light words that tease and flout, But oh, the agitated heart Till someone really find us out.	
'Tis pity if the case require  (Or so we say) that in the end  We speak the literal to inspire  The understanding of a friend.	5
But so with all, from babes that play At hide-and-seek to God afar, So all who hide too well away Must speak and tell us where they are.	10
THE TRIAL BY EXISTENCE	
Even the bravest that are slain Shall not dissemble their surprise On waking to find valor reign, Even as on earth, in paradise; And where they sought without the sword Wide fields of asphodel fore'er, To find that the utmost reward Of daring should be still to dare.	5
The light of heaven falls whole and white And is not shattered into dyes, The light forever is morning light; The hills are verdured pasturewise;	10

The angel hosts with freshness go, And seek with laughter what to brave— And binding all is the hushed snow Of the far-distant breaking wave.	15
And from a cliff top is proclaimed The gathering of the souls for birth, The trial by existence named, The obscuration upon earth. And the slant spirits trooping by In streams and cross- and counter-streams Can but give ear to that sweet cry For its suggestion of what dreams!	20
And the more loitering are turned To view once more the sacrifice Of those who for some good discerned Will gladly give up paradise. And a white shimmering concourse rolls Toward the throne to witness there The speeding of devoted souls Which God makes His especial care.	25 30
And none are taken but who will, Having first heard the life read out That opens earthward, good and ill, Beyond the shadow of a doubt; And very beautifully God limns, And tenderly, life's little dream, But naught extenuates or dims, Setting the thing that is supreme.	35 40
Nor is there wanting in the press Some spirit to stand simply forth,	

Heroic in its nakedness, Against the uttermost of earth. The tale of earth's unhonored things Sounds nobler there than 'neath the sun; And the mind whirls and the heart sings, And a shout greets the daring one.	45
But always God speaks at the end:  "One thought in agony of strife The bravest would have by for friend, The memory that he chose the life; But the pure fate to which you go Admits no memory of choice, Or the woe were not earthly woe To which you give the assenting voice."	50
And so the choice must be again, But the last choice is still the same; And the awe passes wonder then, And a hush falls for all acclaim. And God has taken a flower of gold And broken it, and used therefrom The mystic link to bind and hold Spirit to matter till death come.	60
'Tis of the essence of life here, Though we choose greatly, still to lack The lasting memory at all clear, That life has for us on the wrack Nothing but what we somehow chose;	65
Thus are we wholly stripped of pride In the pain that has but one close, Bearing it crushed and mystified.	70

#### THE TUFT OF FLOWERS

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I went to turn the grass once after one Who mowed it in the dew before the sun.

The dew was gone that made his blade so keen Before I came to view the leveled scene.

I looked for him behind an isle of trees; I listened for his whetstone on the breeze.

But he had gone his way, the grass all mown, And I must be, as he had been—alone,

"As all must be," I said within my heart, "Whether they work together or apart."

But as I said it, swift there passed me by On noiseless wing a bewildered butterfly,

Seeking with memories grown dim o'er night Some resting flower of yesterday's delight.

And once I marked his flight go round and round, As where some flower lay withering on the ground.

And then he flew as far as eye could see, And then on tremulous wing came back to me.

I thought of questions that have no reply, And would have turned to toss the grass to dry;

But he turned first, and led my eye to look At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook,

A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared Beside a reedy brook the scythe had bared.

The mower in the dew had loved them thus, By leaving them to flourish, not for us,	25
Nor yet to draw one thought of ours to him, But from sheer morning gladness at the brim.	
The butterfly and I had lit upon, Nevertheless, a message from the dawn,	30
That made me hear the wakening birds around, And hear his long scythe whispering to the ground,	
And feel a spirit kindred to my own; So that henceforth I worked no more alone;	
But glad with him, I worked as with his aid, And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;	35
And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach.	
"Men work together," I told him from the heart, "Whether they work together or apart."	40
PAN WITH US	
Pan came out of the woods one day— His skin and his hair and his eyes were gray, The gray of the moss of walls were they— And stood in the sun and looked his fill	
At wooded valley and wooded hill.	5

He stood in the zephyr, pipes in hand, On a height of naked pasture land; In all the country he did command

His heart knew peace, for none came here To this lean feeding, save once a year Someone to salt the half-wild steer, Or homespun children with clicking pails Who see so little they tell no tales.	15
He tossed his pipes, too hard to teach A new-world song, far out of reach, For a sylvan sign that the blue jay's screech And the whimper of hawks beside the sun Were music enough for him, for one.	20
Times were changed from what they were: Such pipes kept less of power to stir The fruited bough of the juniper And the fragile bluets clustered there Than the merest aimless breath of air.	25
They were pipes of pagan mirth, And the world had found new terms of worth. He laid him down on the sunburned earth And raveled a flower and looked away. Play? Play?—What should he play?	30
THE DEMIURGE'S LAUGH	
It was far in the sameness of the wood; I was running with joy on the Demon's trail, Though I knew what I hunted was no true god. It was just as the light was beginning to fail That I suddenly heard—all I needed to hear:	5

He saw no smoke and he saw no roof. That was well! and he stamped a hoof.

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It has lasted me many and many a year.

The sound was behind me instead of before, A sleepy sound, but mocking half. As of one who utterly couldn't care.

The Demon arose from his wallow to laugh, Brushing the dirt from his eye as he went; And well I knew what the Demon meant.

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I shall not forget how his laugh rang out. I felt as a fool to have been so caught, And checked my steps to make pretense It was something among the leaves I sought

(Though doubtful whether he stayed to see). Thereafter I sat me against a tree.

#### NOW CLOSE THE WINDOWS

Now close the windows and hush all the fields: If the trees must, let them silently toss; No bird is singing now, and if there is, Be it my loss.

It will be long ere the marshes resume, It will be long ere the earliest bird: So close the windows and not hear the wind, But see all wind-stirred.

#### IN HARDWOOD GROVES

The same leaves over and over again! They fall from giving shade above, To make one texture of faded brown

And fit the earth like a leather glove.

Before the leaves can mount again To fill the trees with another shade, They must go down past things coming up. They must go down into the dark decayed.

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They *must* be pierced by flowers and put Beneath the feet of dancing flowers. However it is in some other world I know that this is the way in ours.

#### A LINE-STORM SONG

The line-storm clouds fly tattered and swift. The road is forlorn all day,

Where a myriad snowy quartz-stones lift, And the hoofprints vanish away.

The roadside flowers, too wet for the bee, Expend their bloom in vain.

Come over the hills and far with me, And be my love in the rain.

The birds have less to say for themselves
In the wood-world's torn despair
Than now these numberless years the elves,
Although they are no less there:

All song of the woods is crushed like some Wild, easily shattered rose.

Come, be my love in the wet woods, come, Where the boughs rain when it blows.

There is the gale to urge behind And bruit our singing down,

And the shallow waters aflutter with wind From which to gather your gown. What matter if we go clear to the west, And come not through dry-shod? For wilding brooch, shall wet your breast The rain-fresh goldenrod.	20
Oh, never this whelming east wind swells But it seems like the sea's return To the ancient lands where it left the shells Before the age of the fern; And it seems like the time when, after doubt,	25
Our love came back amain. Oh, come forth into the storm and rout And be my love in the rain.	30
OCTOBER	
O hushed October morning mild, Thy leaves have ripened to the fall; Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild, Should waste them all.	
The crows above the forest call; Tomorrow they may form and go. O hushed October morning mild, Begin the hours of this day slow. Make the day seem to us less brief.	5
Hearts not averse to being beguiled, Beguile us in the way you know. Release one leaf at break of day; At noon release another leaf; One from our trees, one far away.	10
Retard the sun with gentle mist;	15

Enchant the land with amethyst.
Slow, slow!
For the grapes' sake, if they were all,
Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,
Whose clustered fruit must else be lost—
For the grapes' sake along the wall.

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MY BUTTERFLY

Thine emulous fond flowers are dead, too, And the daft sun-assaulter, he	
That frighted thee so oft, is fled or dead:	
Save only me	
(Nor is it sad to thee!)—	5
Save only me	
There is none left to mourn thee in the fields.	
The gray grass is scarce dappled with the snow;	
Its two banks have not shut upon the river;	
But it is long ago—	10
It seems forever—	
Since first I saw thee glance,	
With all thy dazzling other ones,	
In airy dalliance,	
Precipitate in love,	15
Tossed, tangled, whirled and whirled above,	
Like a limp rose-wreath in a fairy dance.	
When that was, the soft mist	
Of my regret hung not on all the land,	
And I was glad for thee,	20
And glad for me, I wist.	

Thou didst not know, who tottered, wandering on high,

That fate had made thee for the pleasure of the wind, With those great careless wings, Nor yet did I.	25
And there were other things: It seemed God let thee flutter from His gentle clasp, Then fearful He had let thee win Too far beyond Him to be gathered in, Snatched thee, o'ereager, with ungentle grasp.	30
Ah! I remember me How once conspiracy was rife Against my life— The languor of it and the dreaming fond; Surging, the grasses dizzied me of thought, The breeze three odors brought, And a gem-flower waved in a wand!	35
Then when I was distraught And could not speak, Sidelong, full on my cheek, What should that reckless zephyr fling But the wild touch of thy dye-dusty wing!	40
I found that wing broken today! For thou art dead, I said, And the strange birds say. I found it with the withered leaves Under the eaves.	45

# RELUCTANCE

Out through the fields and the woods And over the walls I have wended;

I have climbed the hills of view And looked at the world, and descended; I have come by the highway home, And lo, it is ended.	5
The leaves are all dead on the ground, Save those that the oak is keeping To ravel them one by one And let them go scraping and creeping Out over the crusted snow, When others are sleeping.	10
And the dead leaves lie huddled and still, No longer blown hither and thither; The last lone aster is gone; The flowers of the witch hazel wither; The heart is still aching to seek, But the feet question "Whither?"	15
Ah, when to the heart of man Was it ever less than a treason To go with the drift of things, To yield with a grace to reason, And bow and accept the end Of a love or a season?	20

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But I'll not have the fellow back," he said.	
"I told him so last haying, didn't I?	
If he left then, I said, that ended it.	
What good is he? Who else will harbor him	15
At his age for the little he can do?	
What help he is there's no depending on.	
Off he goes always when I need him most.	
He thinks he ought to earn a little pay,	
Enough at least to buy tobacco with,	20
So he won't have to beg and be beholden.	
'All right,' I say, 'I can't afford to pay	
Any fixed wages, though I wish I could.'	
'Someone else can.' 'Then someone else will have to.'	
I shouldn't mind his bettering himself	25
If that was what it was. You can be certain,	
When he begins like that, there's someone at him	
Trying to coax him off with pocket money—	
In haying time, when any help is scarce.	
In winter he comes back to us. I'm done."	30
"Sh! not so loud: he'll hear you," Mary said.	
"I want him to: he'll have to soon or late."	
"He's worn out. He's asleep beside the stove.	
When I came up from Rowe's I found him here,	
Huddled against the barn door fast asleep,	35
A miserable sight, and frightening, too—	
You needn't smile—I didn't recognize him—	
I wasn't looking for him—and he's changed.	
Wait till you see."	
"Where did you say he'd been?"	
"He didn't say. I dragged him to the house,	40

And gave him tea and tried to make him smoke. I tried to make him talk about his travels. Nothing would do: he just kept nodding off."

"What did he say? Did he say anything?"
"But little."

"Anything? Mary, confess
He said he'd come to ditch the meadow for me."
"Warren!"

"But did he? I just want to know."

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"Of course he did. What would you have him say? Surely you wouldn't grudge the poor old man Some humble way to save his self-respect. He added, if you really care to know, He meant to clear the upper pasture, too. That sounds like something you have heard before? Warren, I wish you could have heard the way He jumbled everything. I stopped to look Two or three times—he made me feel so queer— To see if he was talking in his sleep. He ran on Harold Wilson—you remember— The boy you had in having four years since. He's finished school, and teaching in his college. Silas declares you'll have to get him back. He says they two will make a team for work: Between them they will lay this farm as smooth! The way he mixed that in with other things. He thinks young Wilson a likely lad, though daft On education—you know how they fought All through July under the blazing sun, Silas up on the cart to build the load,

Harold along beside to pitch it on."	
"Yes, I took care to keep well out of earshot."	70
I sympathize. I know just how it feels To think of the right thing to say too late. Harold's associated in his mind with Latin. He asked me what I thought of Harold's saying He studied Latin, like the violin, Because he liked it—that an argument! He said he couldn't make the boy believe He could find water with a hazel prong— Which showed how much good school had ever done him	75 80
"I know, that's Silas' one accomplishment.  He bundles every forkful in its place, And tags and numbers it for future reference, So he can find and easily dislodge it In the unloading. Silas does that well.  He takes it out in bunches like big birds' nests.  You never see him standing on the hay He's trying to lift, straining to lift himself."	90
"He thinks if he could teach him that, he'd be Some good perhaps to someone in the world. He hates to see a boy the fool of books. Poor Silas, so concerned for other folk,	

And nothing to look backward to with pride, 100 And nothing to look forward to with hope, So now and never any different." Part of a moon was falling down the west. Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills. Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw it 105 And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand Among the harplike morning-glory strings, Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves, As if she played unheard some tenderness That wrought on him beside her in the night. 110 "Warren," she said, "he has come home to die: You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time." "Home," he mocked gently. "Yes, what else but home? It all depends on what you mean by home. Of course he's nothing to us, any more 115 Than was the hound that came a stranger to us Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail." "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, They have to take you in.' "I should have called it Something you somehow haven't to deserve." 120 Warren leaned out and took a step or two, Picked up a little stick, and brought it back And broke it in his hand and tossed it by. "Silas has better claim on us you think Than on his brother? Thirteen little miles 125 As the road winds would bring him to his door. Silas has walked that far no doubt today.

Why doesn't he go there? His brother's rich, A somebody—director in the bank." "He never told us that." "We know it, though." 130 "I think his brother ought to help, of course. I'll see to that if there is need. He ought of right To take him in, and might be willing to-He may be better than appearances. But have some pity on Silas. Do you think 135 If he had any pride in claiming kin Or anything he looked for from his brother, He'd keep so still about him all this time?" "I wonder what's between them." "I can tell you. Silas is what he is—we wouldn't mind him— 140 But just the kind that kinsfolk can't abide. He never did a thing so very bad. He don't know why he isn't quite as good As anybody. Worthless though he is, He won't be made ashamed to please his brother." 145 "I can't think Si ever hurt anyone." "No, but he hurt my heart the way he lay And rolled his old head on that sharp-edged chair-back. He wouldn't let me put him on the lounge. You must go in and see what you can do. 150 I made the bed up for him there tonight.

"I'd not be in a hurry to say that."

You'll be surprised at him—how much he's broken.

His working days are done; I'm sure of it."

"I haven't been. Go, look, see for yourself.
But, Warren, please remember how it is:
He's come to help you ditch the meadow.
He has a plan. You mustn't laugh at him.
He may not speak of it, and then he may.
I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon."

It hit the moon.

Then there were three there, making a dim row, The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.

Warren returned—too soon, it seemed to her— Slipped to her side, caught up her hand and waited.

"Warren?" she questioned.

"Dead," was all he answered.

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#### THE MOUNTAIN

The mountain held the town as in a shadow. I saw so much before I slept there once: I noticed that I missed stars in the west, Where its black body cut into the sky. Near me it seemed: I felt it like a wall Behind which I was sheltered from a wind. And yet between the town and it I found, When I walked forth at dawn to see new things, Were fields, a river, and beyond, more fields. The river at the time was fallen away, And made a widespread brawl on cobblestones; But the signs showed what it had done in spring: Good grassland gullied out, and in the grass Ridges of sand, and driftwood stripped of bark.

I crossed the river and swung round the mountain. And there I met a man who moved so slow With white-faced oxen, in a heavy cart, It seemed no harm to stop him altogether.	15
"What town is this?" I asked.	
"This? Lunenburg."	
Then I was wrong: the town of my sojourn, Beyond the bridge, was not that of the mountain, But only felt at night its shadowy presence. "Where is your village? Very far from here?"	20
"There is no village—only scattered farms.	
We were but sixty voters last election. We can't in nature grow to many more: That thing takes all the room!" He moved his goad. The mountain stood there to be pointed at. Pasture ran up the side a little way,	25
And then there was a wall of trees with trunks; After that only tops of trees, and cliffs Imperfectly concealed among the leaves. A dry ravine emerged from under boughs Into the pasture.	30
"That looks like a path. Is that the way to reach the top from here?— Not for this morning, but some other time: I must be getting back to breakfast now."	35
"I don't advise your trying from this side. There is no proper path, but those that have Been up, I understand, have climbed from Ladd's. That's five miles back. You can't mistake the place: They logged it there last winter some way up	40

I'd take you, but I'm bound the other way."
"You've never climbed it?"

"I've been on the sides,
Deer-hunting and trout-fishing. There's a brook
That starts up on it somewhere—I've heard say
Right on the top, tip-top—a curious thing.
But what would interest you about the brook,
It's always cold in summer, warm in winter.
One of the great sights going is to see
It steam in winter like an ox's breath,
Until the bushes all along its banks
Are inch-deep with the frosty spines and bristles—
You know the kind. Then let the sun shine on it!"

"There ought to be a view around the world From such a mountain—if it isn't wooded Clear to the top." I saw through leafy screens Great granite terraces in sun and shadow, Shelves one could rest a knee on getting up—With depths behind him sheer a hundred feet—Or turn and sit on and look out and down, With little ferns in crevices at his elbow.

"As to that I can't say. But there's the spring, Right on the summit, almost like a fountain. That ought to be worth seeing."

"If it's there.

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You never saw it?"

"I guess there's no doubt About its being there. I never saw it. It may not be right on the very top: It wouldn't have to be a long way down

To have some head of water from above, And a good distance down might not be noticed By anyone who'd come a long way up. One time I asked a fellow climbing it To look and tell me later how it was."	70
"What did he say?"	
"He said there was a lake Somewhere in Ireland on a mountain top."	75
"But a lake's different. What about the spring?"	
"He never got up high enough to see. That's why I don't advise your trying this side. He tried this side. I've always meant to go And look myself, but you know how it is: It doesn't seem so much to climb a mountain You've worked around the foot of all your life. What would I do? Go in my overalls, With a big stick, the same as when the cows Haven't come down to the bars at milking time? Or with a shotgun for a stray black bear? 'Twouldn't seem real to climb for climbing it."	80
"I shouldn't climb it if I didn't want to— Not for the sake of climbing. What's its name?"  "We call it Hor: I don't know if that's right."	90
"Can one walk around it? Would it be too far?"	
"You can drive round and keep in Lunenburg, But it's as much as ever you can do, The boundary lines keep in so close to it. Hor is the township, and the township's Hor— And a few houses sprinkled round the foot,	95

Like boulders broken off the upper cliff, Rolled out a little farther than the rest."

"Warm in December, cold in June, you say?"

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"I don't suppose the water's changed at all. You and I know enough to know it's warm Compared with cold, and cold compared with warm. But all the fun's in how you say a thing."

"You've lived here all your life?"

"Ever since Hor 105 t, I did not hear. th light touches

Was no bigger than a——" What, I did not hear. He drew the oxen toward him with light touches Of his slim goad on nose and offside flank, Gave them their marching orders and was moving.

# A HUNDRED COLLARS

Lancaster bore him—such a little town,
Such a great man. It doesn't see him often
Of late years, though he keeps the old homestead
And sends the children down there with their mother
To run wild in the summer—a little wild.
Sometimes he joins them for a day or two
And sees old friends he somehow can't get near.
They meet him in the general store at night,
Preoccupied with formidable mail,
Rifling a printed letter as he talks.
They seem afraid. He wouldn't have it so:
Though a great scholar, he's a democrat,
If not at heart, at least on principle.
Lately when coming up to Lancaster,
His train being late, he missed another train

And had four hours to wait at Woodsville Junction After eleven o'clock at night. Too tired To think of sitting such an ordeal out, He turned to the hotel to find a bed. "No room," the night clerk said. "Unless——" 20 Woodsville's a place of shrieks and wandering lamps And cars that shock and rattle—and one hotel. "You say 'unless." "Unless you wouldn't mind Sharing a room with someone else." "Who is it?" "A man." "So I should hope. What kind of man?" 25 "I know him: he's all right. A man's a man. Separate beds, of course, you understand." The night clerk blinked his eyes and dared him on. "Who's that man sleeping in the office chair? Has he had the refusal of my chance?" 30 "He was afraid of being robbed or murdered. What do you say?" "I'll have to have a bed." The night clerk led him up three flights of stairs And down a narrow passage full of doors, At the last one of which he knocked and entered. 35 "Lafe, here's a fellow wants to share your room."

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"Show him this way. I'm not afraid of him. I'm not so drunk I can't take care of myself."

The night clerk clapped a bedstead on the foot. "This will be yours. Good-night," he said, and went, 40 "Lafe was the name, I think?" "Yes, Layfayette. You got it the first time. And yours?" "Magoon. Doctor Magoon." "A Doctor?" "Well, a teacher." "Professor Square-the-circle-till-you're-tired? Hold on, there's something I don't think of now 45 That I had on my mind to ask the first Man that knew anything I happened in with. I'll ask you later-don't let me forget it." The Doctor looked at Lafe and looked away. A man? A brute. Naked above the waist. 50 He sat there creased and shining in the light, Fumbling the buttons in a well-starched shirt. "I'm moving into a size-larger shirt. I've felt mean lately; mean's no name for it. I just found what the matter was tonight: 55 I've been a-choking like a nursery tree When it outgrows the wire band of its name tag. I blamed it on the hot spell we've been having. 'Twas nothing but my foolish hanging back, Not liking to own up I'd grown a size.

The Doctor caught his throat convulsively. "Oh—ah—fourteen—fourteen."

Number eighteen this is. What size do you wear?"

"Fourteen! You say so!	
I can remember when I wore fourteen. And come to think I must have back at home More than a hundred collars, size fourteen. Too bad to waste them all. You ought to have them. They're yours and welcome; let me send them to you.— What makes you stand there on one leg like that? You're not much furtherer than where Kike left you. You act as if you wished you hadn't come. Sit down or lie down, friend; you make me nervous."	70
The Doctor made a subdued dash for it, And propped himself at bay against a pillow. "Not that way, with your shoes on Kike's white bed. You can't rest that way. Let me pull your shoes off."	75
"Don't touch me, please—I say, don't touch me, please. I'll not be put to bed by you, my man."	
"Just as you say. Have it your own way, then. 'My man' is it? You talk like a professor. Speaking of who's afraid of who, however, I'm thinking I have more to lose than you If anything should happen to be wrong.	80
Who wants to cut your number fourteen throat! Let's have a showdown as an evidence Of good faith. There is ninety dollars. Come, if you're not afraid."	85
"I'm not afraid. There's five: that's all I carry."	
"I can search you?	
Where are you moving over to? Stay still. You'd better tuck your money under you	90

And sleep on it, the way I always do When I'm with people I don't trust at night." "Will you believe me if I put it there Right on the counterpane—that I do trust you?" "You'd say so, Mister Man.—I'm a collector. 95 My ninety isn't mine—you won't think that. I pick it up a dollar at a time All round the country for the Weekly News, Published in Bow. You know the Weekly News?" "Known it since I was young." "Then you know me. 100 Now we are getting on together—talking. I'm sort of Something for it at the front. My business is to find what people want: They pay for it, and so they ought to have it. Fairbanks, he says to me—he's editor— 105 'Feel out the public sentiment'—he says. A good deal comes on me when all is said. The only trouble is we disagree In politics: I'm Vermont Democrat— You know what that is, sort of double-dyed; 110 The News has always been Republican. Fairbanks, he says to me, 'Help us this year,' Meaning by us their ticket. 'No,' I says, 'I can't and won't. You've been in long enough: It's time you turned around and boosted us. 115 You'll have to pay me more than ten a week If I'm expected to elect Bill Taft.

"You seem to shape the paper's policy."

I doubt if I could do it anyway."

"You see I'm in with everybody, know 'em all.  I almost know their farms as well as they do."	120
"You drive around? It must be pleasant work."	
"It's business, but I can't say it's not fun. What I like best's the lay of different farms, Coming out on them from a stretch of woods, Or over a hill or round a sudden corner. I like to find folks getting out in spring, Raking the dooryard, working near the house.	125
Later they get out further in the fields.  Everything's shut sometimes except the barn;	130
The family's all away in some back meadow. There's a hay load a-coming—when it comes. And later still they all get driven in:	130
The fields are stripped to lawn, the garden patches	
Stripped to bare ground, the maple trees To whips and poles. There's nobody about. The chimney, though, keeps up a good brisk smoking. And I lie back and ride. I take the reins Only when someone's coming, and the mare	135
Stops when she likes: I tell her when to go. I've spoiled Jemima in more ways than one. She's got so she turns in at every house As if she had some sort of curvature, No matter if I have no errand there.	140
She thinks I'm sociable. I maybe am. It's seldom I get down except for meals, though. Folks entertain me from the kitchen doorstep, All in a family row down to the youngest."	145
"One would suppose they might not be as glad To see you as you are to see them."	

"Oh. 150 Because I want their dollar? I don't want Anything they've not got. I never dun. I'm there, and they can pay me if they like. I go nowhere on purpose: I happen by.— Sorry there is no cup to give you a drink. 155 I drink out of the bottle—not your style. Mayn't I offer you—?" "No, no, no, thank you." "Just as you say. Here's looking at you, then.— And now I'm leaving you a little while. You'll rest easier when I'm gone, perhaps— 160 Lie down—let yourself go and get some sleep. But first—let's see—what was I going to ask you? Those collars—who shall I address them to. Suppose you aren't awake when I come back?" "Really, friend, I can't let you. You—may need them." "Not till I shrink, when they'll be out of style." "But really I—I have so many collars." "I don't know who I rather would have have them. They're only turning yellow where they are. But you're the doctor, as the saying is. 170 I'll put the light out. Don't you wait for me: I've just begun the night. You get some sleep. I'll knock so-fashion and peep round the door When I come back, so you'll know who it is. There's nothing I'm afraid of like scared people. 175 I don't want you should shoot me in the head.— What am I doing carrying off this bottle?— There now, you get some sleep."

Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you——"
"If—you—do!" She was opening the door wider.
"Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.

115
I'll follow and bring you back by force. I will!—"

### THE BLACK COTTAGE

We chanced in passing by that afternoon To catch it in a sort of special picture Among tar-banded ancient cherry trees, Set well back from the road in rank lodged grass, The little cottage we were speaking of, 5 A front with just a door between two windows, Fresh painted by the shower a velvet black. We paused, the minister and I, to look. He made as if to hold it at arm's length Or put the leaves aside that framed it in. 10 "Pretty," he said. "Come in. No one will care." The path was a vague parting in the grass That led us to a weathered windowsill. We pressed our faces to the pane. "You see," he said, "Everything's as she left it when she died. 15 Her sons won't sell the house or the things in it. They say they mean to come and summer here Where they were boys. They haven't come this year. They live so far away—one is out West— It will be hard for them to keep their word. 20 Anyway they won't have the place disturbed." A buttoned haircloth lounge spread scrolling arms Under a crayon portrait on the wall, Done sadly from an old daguerreotype. "That was the father as he went to war. 25

She always, when she talked about the war, Sooner or later came and leaned, half knelt, Against the lounge beside it, though I doubt If such unlifelike lines kept power to stir Anything in her after all the years. 30 He fell at Gettysburg or Fredericksburg, I ought to know—it makes a difference which: Fredericksburg wasn't Gettysburg, of course. But what I'm getting to is how forsaken A little cottage this has always seemed; 35 Since she went, more than ever, but before-I don't mean altogether by the lives That had gone out of it, the father first, Then the two sons, till she was left alone. (Nothing could draw her after those two sons. 40 She valued the considerate neglect She had at some cost taught them after years.) I mean by the world's having passed it by— As we almost got by this afternoon. It always seems to me a sort of mark 45 To measure how far fifty years have brought us. Why not sit down if you are in no haste? These doorsteps seldom have a visitor. The warping boards pull out their own old nails With none to tread and put them in their place. 50 She had her own idea of things, the old lady. And she liked talk. She had seen Garrison And Whittier, and had her story of them. One wasn't long in learning that she thought, Whatever else the Civil War was for. 55 It wasn't just to keep the States together, Nor just to free the slaves, though it did both. She wouldn't have believed those ends enough

To have given outright for them all she gave.	
Her giving somehow touched the principle	60
That all men are created free and equal.	
And to hear her quaint phrases—so removed	
From the world's view today of all those things.	
That's a hard mystery of Jefferson's.	
What did he mean? Of course the easy way	65
Is to decide it simply isn't true.	
It may not be. I heard a fellow say so.	
But never mind, the Welshman got it planted	
Where it will trouble us a thousand years.	
Each age will have to reconsider it.	70
You couldn't tell her what the West was saying,	
And what the South, to her serene belief.	
She had some art of hearing and yet not	
Hearing the latter wisdom of the world.	
White was the only race she ever knew.	75
Black she had scarcely seen, and yellow never.	
But how could they be made so very unlike	
By the same hand working in the same stuff?	
She had supposed the war decided that.	
What are you going to do with such a person?	80
Strange how such innocence gets its own way.	
I shouldn't be surprised if in this world	
It were the force that would at last prevail.	
Do you know but for her there was a time	
When, to please younger members of the church,	85
Or rather say non-members in the church,	
Whom we all have to think of nowadays,	
would have changed the Creed a very little?	
Not that she ever had to ask me not to;	
It never got so far as that; but the bare thought	90
Of her old tremulous bonnet in the pew.	70

And of her half asleep, was too much for me. Why, I might wake her up and startle her. It was the words 'descended into Hades' That seemed too pagan to our liberal youth. 95 You know they suffered from a general onslaught. And well, if they weren't true why keep right on Saying them like the heathen? We could drop them. Only—there was the bonnet in the pew. Such a phrase couldn't have meant much to her. 100 But suppose she had missed it from the Creed. As a child misses the unsaid Good-night And falls asleep with heartache—how should I feel? I'm just as glad she made me keep hands off, For, dear me, why abandon a belief 105 Merely because it ceases to be true. Cling to it long enough, and not a doubt It will turn true again, for so it goes. Most of the change we think we see in life Is due to truths being in and out of favor. 110 As I sit here, and oftentimes, I wish I could be monarch of a desert land I could devote and dedicate forever To the truths we keep coming back and back to. So desert it would have to be, so walled 115 By mountain ranges half in summer snow, No one would covet it or think it worth The pains of conquering to force change on. Scattered oases where men dwelt, but mostly Sand dunes held loosely in tamarisk 120 Blown over and over themselves in idleness. Sand grains should sugar in the natal dew The babe born to the desert, the sandstorm

Retard mid-waste my cowering caravans—

"There are bees in this wall." He struck the clapboards, 125 Fierce heads looked out; small bodies pivoted. We rose to go. Sunset blazed on the windows.

#### **BLUEBERRIES**

"You ought to have seen what I saw on my way To the village, through Patterson's pasture today: Blueberries as big as the end of your thumb, Real sky-blue, and heavy, and ready to drum In the cavernous pail of the first one to come! 5 And all ripe together, not some of them green And some of them ripe! You ought to have seen!" "I don't know what part of the pasture you mean." "You know where they cut off the woods—let me see— It was two years ago-or no!-can it be 10 No longer than that?—and the following fall The fire ran and burned it all up but the wall." "Why, there hasn't been time for the bushes to grow. That's always the way with the blueberries, though: There may not have been the ghost of a sign 15 Of them anywhere under the shade of the pine, But get the pine out of the way, you may burn The pasture all over until not a fern Or grass-blade is left, not to mention a stick, And presto, they're up all around you as thick 20 And hard to explain as a conjuror's trick."

"It must be on charcoal they fatten their fruit. I taste in them sometimes the flavor of soot.

And after all, really they're ebony skinned:
The blue's but a mist from the breath of the wind,
A tarnish that goes at a touch of the hand,
And less than the tan with which pickers are tanned."

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"Does Patterson know what he has, do you think?"

"He may and not care, and so leave the chewink To gather them for him—you know what he is. He won't make the fact that they're rightfully his An excuse for keeping us other folk out."

"I wonder you didn't see Loren about."

"The best of it was that I did. Do you know, I was just getting through what the field had to show And over the wall and into the road, When who should come by, with a democrat-load Of all the young chattering Lorens alive, But Loren, the fatherly, out for a drive."

"He saw you, then? What did he do? Did he frown?"

"He just kept nodding his head up and down. You know how politely he always goes by. But he thought a big thought—I could tell by his eye—Which being expressed, might be this in effect: 'I have left those there berries, I shrewdly suspect, To ripen too long. I am greatly to blame.'"

"He's a thriftier person than some I could name."

"He seems to be thrifty; and hasn't he need, With the mouths of all those young Lorens to feed? He has brought them all up on wild berries, they say, Like birds. They store a great many away. They eat them the year round, and those they don't eat

They sell in the store and buy shoes for their feet."	
"Who cares what they say? It's a nice way to live, Just taking what Nature is willing to give, Not forcing her hand with harrow and plow."	55
"I wish you had seen his perpetual bow— And the air of the youngsters! Not one of them turned, And they looked so solemn-absurdly concerned."	
"I wish I knew half what the flock of them know Of where all the berries and other things grow, Cranberries in bogs and raspberries on top Of the boulder-strewn mountain, and when they will cro I met them one day and each had a flower Stuck into his berries as fresh as a shower; Some strange kind—they told me it hadn't a name."	60 p. 65
"I've told you how once, not long after we came, I almost provoked poor Loren to mirth By going to him of all people on earth To ask if he knew any fruit to be had For the picking. The rascal, he said he'd be glad To tell if he knew. But the year had been bad. There had been some berries—but those were all gone. He didn't say where they had been. He went on: 'I'm sure—I'm sure'—as polite as could be. He spoke to his wife in the door, 'Let me see, Mame, we don't know any good berrying place?' It was all he could do to keep a straight face."	70 75
"If he thinks all the fruit that grows wild is for him, He'll find he's mistaken. See here, for a whim, We'll pick in the Pattersons' pasture this year. We'll go in the morning, that is, if it's clear.	80

And the sun shines out warm: the vines must be wet. It's so long since I picked I almost forget How we used to pick berries: we took one look round, 85 Then sank out of sight like trolls underground. And saw nothing more of each other, or heard. Unless when you said I was keeping a bird Away from its nest, and I said it was you. 'Well, one of us is.' For complaining it flew 90 Around and around us. And then for a while We picked, till I feared you had wandered a mile, And I thought I had lost you. I lifted a shout Too loud for the distance you were, it turned out, For when you made answer, your voice was as low 95 As talking—you stood up beside me, you know." "We shan't have the place to ourselves to enjoy— Not likely, when all the young Lorens deploy. They'll be there tomorrow, or even tonight. They won't be too friendly—they may be polite— 100 To people they look on as having no right To pick where they're picking. But we won't complain.

# A SERVANT TO SERVANTS

105

5

I didn't make you know how glad I was
To have you come and camp here on our land.
I promised myself to get down some day
And see the way you lived, but I don't know!
With a houseful of hungry men to feed
I guess you'd find. . . . It seems to me

You ought to have seen how it looked in the rain, The fruit mixed with water in layers of leaves, Like two kinds of jewels, a vision for thieves."

I can't express my feelings, any more Than I can raise my voice or want to lift My hand (oh, I can lift it when I have to). Did ever you feel so? I hope you never. 10 It's got so I don't even know for sure Whether I am glad, sorry, or anything. There's nothing but a voice-like left inside That seems to tell me how I ought to feel, And would feel if I wasn't all gone wrong. 15 You take the lake. I look and look at it. I see it's a fair, pretty sheet of water. I stand and make myself repeat out loud The advantages it has, so long and narrow, Like a deep piece of some old running river 20 Cut short off at both ends. It lies five miles Straightaway through the mountain notch From the sink window where I wash the plates. And all our storms come up toward the house, Drawing the slow waves whiter and whiter and whiter. 25 It took my mind off doughnuts and soda biscuit To step outdoors and take the water dazzle A sunny morning, or take the rising wind About my face and body and through my wrapper, When a storm threatened from the Dragon's Den, 30 And a cold chill shivered across the lake. I see it's a fair, pretty sheet of water, Our Willoughby! How did you hear of it? I expect, though, everyone's heard of it. In a book about ferns? Listen to that! 35 You let things more like feathers regulate Your going and coming. And you like it here? I can see how you might. But I don't know! It would be different if more people came,

For then there would be business. As it is, 40 The cottages Len built, sometimes we rent them, Sometimes we don't. We've a good piece of shore That ought to be worth something, and may yet. But I don't count on it as much as Len. He looks on the bright side of everything. 45 Including me. He thinks I'll be all right With doctoring. But it's not medicine— Lowe is the only doctor's dared to say so-It's rest I want—there, I have said it out— From cooking meals for hungry hired men 50 And washing dishes after them—from doing Things over and over that just won't stay done. By good rights I ought not to have so much Put on me, but there seems no other way. Len says one steady pull more ought to do it. 55 He says the best way out is always through. And I agree to that, or in so far As that I can see no way out but through— Leastways for me—and then they'll be convinced. It's not that Len don't want the best for me. 60 It was his plan our moving over in Beside the lake from where that day I showed you We used to live—ten miles from anywhere. We didn't change without some sacrifice, But Len went at it to make up the loss. 65 His work's a man's, of course, from sun to sun, But he works when he works as hard as I do— Though there's small profit in comparisons. (Women and men will make them all the same.) But work ain't all. Len undertakes too much. 70 He's into everything in town. This year It's highways, and he's got too many men

Around him to look after that make waste.	
They take advantage of him shamefully,	
And proud, too, of themselves for doing so.	75
We have four here to board, great good-for-nothings,	
Sprawling about the kitchen with their talk	
While I fry their bacon. Much they care!	
No more put out in what they do or say	
Than if I wasn't in the room at all.	80
Coming and going all the time, they are:	
I don't learn what their names are, let alone	
Their characters, or whether they are safe	
To have inside the house with doors unlocked.	
I'm not afraid of them, though, if they're not	85
Afraid of me. There's two can play at that.	
I have my fancies: it runs in the family.	
My father's brother wasn't right. They kept him	
Locked up for years back there at the old farm.	
I've been away once—yes, I've been away.	90
The State Asylum. I was prejudiced;	
I wouldn't have sent anyone of mine there;	
You know the old idea—the only asylum	
Was the poorhouse, and those who could afford,	
Rather than send their folks to such a place,	95
Kept them at home; and it does seem more human.	
But it's not so: the place is the asylum.	
There they have every means proper to do with,	
And you aren't darkening other people's lives—	
Worse than no good to them, and they no good	100
To you in your condition; you can't know	
Affection or the want of it in that state.	
I've heard too much of the old-fashioned way.	
My father's brother, he went mad quite young.	
Some thought he had been bitten by a dog,	105
- · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	200

Because his violence took on the form Of carrying his pillow in his teeth: But it's more likely he was crossed in love. Or so the story goes. It was some girl. Anyway all he talked about was love. 110 They soon saw he would do someone a mischief If he wa'n't kept strict watch of, and it ended In father's building him a sort of cage, Or room within a room, of hickory poles, Like stanchions in the barn, from floor to ceiling-115 A narrow passage all the way around. Anything they put in for furniture He'd tear to pieces, even a bed to lie on. So they made the place comfortable with straw, Like a beast's stall, to ease their consciences. 120 Of course they had to feed him without dishes. They tried to keep him clothed, but he paraded With his clothes on his arm—all of his clothes. Cruel—it sounds. I s'pose they did the best They knew. And just when he was at the height, 125 Father and mother married, and mother came, A bride, to help take care of such a creature. And accommodate her young life to his. That was what marrying father meant to her. She had to lie and hear love things made dreadful 130 By his shouts in the night. He'd shout and shout Until the strength was shouted out of him, And his voice died down slowly from exhaustion. He'd pull his bars apart like bow and bowstring, And let them go and make them twang, until 135 His hands had worn them smooth as any oxbow. And then he'd crow as if he thought that child's play— The only fun he had. I've heard them say, though,

They found a way to put a stop to it.	
He was before my time—I never saw him;	140
But the pen stayed exactly as it was,	
There in the upper chamber in the ell,	
A sort of catchall full of attic clutter.	
I often think of the smooth hickory bars.	
It got so I would say—you know, half fooling—	145
"It's time I took my turn upstairs in jail"—	
Just as you will till it becomes a habit.	
No wonder I was glad to get away.	
Mind you, I waited till Len said the word.	
I didn't want the blame if things went wrong.	150
I was glad though, no end, when we moved out,	
And I looked to be happy, and I was,	
As I said, for a while—but I don't know!	
Somehow the change wore out like a prescription.	
And there's more to it than just window views	155
And living by a lake. I'm past such help—	
Unless Len took the notion, which he won't,	
And I won't ask him—it's not sure enough.	
I s'pose I've got to go the road I'm going:	
Other folks have to, and why shouldn't I?	160
I almost think if I could do like you,	
Drop everything and live out on the ground—	
But it might be, come night, I shouldn't like it,	
Or a long rain. I should soon get enough,	
And be glad of a good roof overhead.	165
I've lain awake thinking of you, I'll warrant,	
More than you have yourself, some of these nights.	
The wonder was the tents weren't snatched away	
From over you as you lay in your beds.	
I haven't courage for a risk like that.	170
Bless you, of course you're keeping me from work,	

But the thing of it is, I need to be kept. There's work enough to do—there's always that; But behind's behind. The worst that you can do Is set me back a little more behind. I shan't catch up in this world, anyway. I'd rather you'd not go unless you must.

# AFTER APPLE-PICKING

175

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree Toward heaven still. And there's a barrel that I didn't fill Beside it, and there may be two or three Apples I didn't pick upon some bough. 5 But I am done with apple-picking now. Essence of winter sleep is on the night, The scent of apples: I am drowsing off. I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight I got from looking through a pane of glass 10 I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough And held against the world of hoary grass. It melted, and I let it fall and break. But I was well Upon my way to sleep before it fell, 15 And I could tell What form my dreaming was about to take. Magnified apples appear and disappear, Stem end and blossom end. And every fleck of russet showing clear. 20 My instep arch not only keeps the ache, It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round. I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.

And I keep hearing from the cellar bin	
The rumbling sound	25
Of load on load of apples coming in.	
For I have had too much	
Of apple-picking: I am overtired	
Of the great harvest I myself desired.	
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,	30
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.	
For all	
That struck the earth,	
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,	
Went surely to the cider-apple heap	35
As of no worth.	
One can see what will trouble	
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.	
Were he not gone,	
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his	40
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,	
Or just some human sleep.	

## THE CODE

There were three in the meadow by the brook Gathering up windrows, piling cocks of hay, With an eye always lifted toward the west Where an irregular sun-bordered cloud Darkly advanced with a perpetual dagger Flickering across its bosom. Suddenly One helper, thrusting pitchfork in the ground, Marched himself off the field and home. One stayed. The town-bred farmer failed to understand.

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<sup>&</sup>quot;What is there wrong?"

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"What did I say?"

"About our taking pains."

"To cock the hay?—because it's going to shower? I said that more than half an hour ago. I said it to myself as much as you."

"You didn't know. But James is one big fool. He thought you meant to find fault with his work. That's what the average farmer would have meant. James would take time, of course, to chew it over Before he acted: he's just got round to act."

"He is a fool if that's the way he takes me."

"Don't let it bother you. You've found out something. The hand that knows his business won't be told To do work better or faster—those two things. I'm as particular as anyone:

Most likely I'd have served you just the same. But I know you don't understand our ways. You were just talking what was in your mind, What was in all our minds, and you weren't hinting. Tell you a story of what happened once: I was up here in Salem, at a man's

Named Sanders, with a gang of four or five Doing the having. No one liked the boss. He was one of the kind sports call a spider, All wiry arms and legs that spread out wavy From a humped body nigh as big's a biscuit. But work! that man could work, especially If by so doing he could get more work

Out of his hired help. I'm not denying

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He was hard on himself. I couldn't find	
That he kept any hours—not for himself.	40
Daylight and lantern-light were one to him:	
I've heard him pounding in the barn all night.	
But what he liked was someone to encourage.	
Them that he couldn't lead he'd get behind	
And drive, the way you can, you know, in mowing—	45
Keep at their heels and threaten to mow their legs off.	
I'd seen about enough of his bulling tricks	
(We call that bulling). I'd been watching him.	
So when he paired off with me in the hayfield	
To load the load, thinks I, Look out for trouble.	50
I built the load and topped it off; old Sanders	
Combed it down with a rake and says, 'O.K.'	
Everything went well till we reached the barn	
With a big jag to empty in a bay.	
You understand that meant the easy job	55
For the man up on top, of throwing down	
The hay and rolling it off wholesale,	
Where on a mow it would have been slow lifting.	
You wouldn't think a fellow'd need much urging	
Under those circumstances, would you now?	60
But the old fool seizes his fork in both hands,	
And looking up bewhiskered out of the pit,	
Shouts like an army captain, 'Let her come!'	
Thinks I, D'ye mean it? 'What was that you said?'	
I asked out loud, so's there'd be no mistake,	65
'Did you say, "Let her come"?' 'Yes, let her come.'	
He said it over, but he said it softer.	
Never you say a thing like that to a man,	
Not if he values what he is. God, I'd as soon	
Murdered him as left out his middle name.	70
I'd built the load and knew right where to find it.	

Two or three forkfuls I picked lightly round for Like meditating, and then I just dug in And dumped the rackful on him in ten lots. I looked over the side once in the dust 75 And caught sight of him treading-water-like. Keeping his head above. 'Damn ye,' I says, 'That gets ye!' He squeaked like a squeezed rat. That was the last I saw or heard of him. I cleaned the rack and drove out to cool off. 80 As I sat mopping haveed from my neck. And sort of waiting to be asked about it, One of the boys sings out, 'Where's the old man?' 'I left him in the barn under the hav. If ye want him, ye can go and dig him out.' 85 They realized from the way I swabbed my neck More than was needed, something must be up. They headed for the barn; I stayed where I was. They told me afterward. First they forked hav, A lot of it, out into the barn floor. 90 Nothing! They listened for him. Not a rustle. I guess they thought I'd spiked him in the temple Before I buried him, or I couldn't have managed. They excavated more. 'Go keep his wife Out of the barn.' Someone looked in a window, 95 And curse me if he wasn't in the kitchen Slumped way down in a chair, with both his feet Against the stove, the hottest day that summer. He looked so clean disgusted from behind There was no one that dared to stir him up, 100 Or let him know that he was being looked at. Apparently I hadn't buried him (I may have knocked him down); but my just trying To bury him had hurt his dignity.

He had gone to the house so's not to meet me. 105 He kept away from us all afternoon. We tended to his hay. We saw him out After a while picking peas in his garden: He couldn't keep away from doing something." "Weren't you relieved to find he wasn't dead?" 110 "No! and yet I don't know—it's hard to say. I went about to kill him fair enough." "You took an awkward way. Did he discharge you?" "Discharge me? No! He knew I did just right."

## THE GENERATIONS OF MEN

A governor it was proclaimed this time, When all who would come seeking in New Hampshire Ancestral memories might come together. And those of the name Stark gathered in Bow, A rock-strewn town where farming has fallen off, And sprout-lands flourish where the ax has gone. Someone had literally run to earth In an old cellar hole in a byroad The origin of all the family there. Thence they were sprung, so numerous a tribe 10 That now not all the houses left in town Made shift to shelter them without the help Of here and there a tent in grove and orchard. They were at Bow, but that was not enough: Nothing would do but they must fix a day 15 To stand together on the crater's verge That turned them on the world, and try to fathom The past and get some strangeness out of it.

5

But rain spoiled all. The day began uncertain, 19 With clouds low-trailing and moments of rain that misted. The young folk held some hope out to each other Till well toward noon, when the storm settled down With a swish in the grass. "What if the others Are there," they said. "It isn't going to rain." Only one from a farm not far away 25 Strolled thither, not expecting he would find Anyone else, but out of idleness. One, and one other, yes, for there were two. The second round the curving hillside road Was a girl; and she halted some way off 30 To reconnoiter, and then made up her mind At least to pass by and see who he was, And perhaps hear some word about the weather. This was some Stark she didn't know. He nodded. "No fête today," he said. "It looks that way." 35 She swept the heavens, turning on her heel. "I only idled down." "I idled down." Provision there had been for just such meeting Of stranger-cousins, in a family tree Drawn on a sort of passport with the branch 40 Of the one bearing it done in detail-Some zealous one's laborious device. She made a sudden movement toward her bodice,

"Yes, Stark. And you?"

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As one who clasps her heart. They laughed together.

"Stark?" he inquired. "No matter for the proof."

# "I'm Stark." He drew his passport.

"You know we might not be and still be cousins: The town is full of Chases, Lowes, and Baileys, All claiming some priority in Starkness. My mother was a Lane, yet might have married Anyone upon earth and still her children Would have been Starks, and doubtless here today."	50
"You riddle with your genealogy, Like a Viola. I don't follow you."	
"I only mean my mother was a Stark Several times over, and by marrying father No more than brought us back into the name."	55
"One ought not to be thrown into confusion By a plain statement of relationship, But I own what you say makes my head spin. You take my card—you seem so good at such things— And see if you can reckon our cousinship. Why not take seats here on the cellar wall And dangle feet among the raspberry vines?"	60
"Under the shelter of the family tree."	65
"Just so-that ought to be enough protection."	
"Not from the rain. I think it's going to rain."	
"It's raining."	
"No, it's misting; let's be fair.  Does the rain seem to you to cool the eyes?"	
The situation was like this: the road Bowed outward on the mountain halfway up, And disappeared and ended not far off.	70

No one went home that way. The only house Beyond where they were was a shattered seedpod. And below roared a brook hidden in trees, The sound of which was silence for the place. This he sat listening to till she gave judgment.	75
"On father's side, it seems, we're—let me see——"	
"Don't be too technical.—You have three cards."	
"Four cards: one yours, three mine (one for each branch Of the Stark family I'm a member of)."	81
"D'you know a person so related to herself Is supposed to be mad."	
"I may be mad."	
"You look so, sitting out here in the rain Studying genealogy with me You never saw before. What will we come to With all this pride of ancestry, we Yankees? I think we're all mad. Tell me why we're here, Drawn into town about this cellar hole Like wild geese on a lake before a storm? What do we see in such a hole, I wonder."	9
"The Indians had a myth of Chicamoztoc, Which means The-Seven-Caves-that-We-Came-Out-of. This is the pit from which we Starks were digged."	
"You must be learned. That's what you see in it?"	9
"And what do you see?"	
"Yes, what do I see? First let me look. I see raspberry vines——"	
"Oh, if you're going to use your eyes, just hear	

What I see. It's a little, little boy, As pale and dim as a match flame in the sun; He's groping in the cellar after jam— He thinks it's dark, and it's flooded with daylight."	100
"He's nothing. Listen. When I lean like this I can make out old Grandsir Stark distinctly—With his pipe in his mouth and his brown jug—Bless you, it isn't Grandsir Stark, it's Granny; But the pipe's there and smoking, and the jug. She's after cider, the old girl, she's thirsty; Here's hoping she gets her drink and gets out safely."	105
"Tell me about her. Does she look like me?"	110
"She should, shouldn't she?—you're so many times Over descended from her. I believe She does look like you. Stay the way you are. The nose is just the same, and so's the chin— Making allowance, making due allowance."	115
"You poor, dear, great, great, great, great Granny!"	
"See that you get her greatness right. Don't stint her."	
"Yes, it's important, though you think it isn't. I won't be teased. But see how wet I am."	
"Yes, you must go; we can't stay here forever. But wait until I give you a hand up. A bead of silver water more or less,	120
Strung on your hair, won't hurt your summer looks. I wanted to try something with the noise That the brook raises in the empty valley. We have seen visions—now consult the voices. Something I must have learned riding in trains	125

When I was young. I used to use the roar To set the voices speaking out of it, Speaking or singing, and the band-music playing. Perhaps you have the art of what I mean. I've never listened in among the sounds That a brook makes in such a wild descent. It ought to give a purer oracle."	130
"It's as you throw a picture on a screen: The meaning of it all is out of you; The voices give you what you wish to hear."	135
"Strangely, it's anything they wish to give."	
"Then I don't know. It must be strange enough. I wonder if it's not your make-believe. What do you think you're like to hear today?"	140
"From the sense of our having been together—But why take time for what I'm like to hear? I'll tell you what the voices really say. You will do very well right where you are A little longer. I mustn't feel too hurried, Or I can't give myself to hear the voices."	145
"Is this some trance you are withdrawing into?"	
"You must be very still; you mustn't talk."	
"I'll hardly breathe."	
"The voices seem to say——"	150
"I'm waiting."	
"Don't! The voices seem to say: Call her Nausicaä, the unafraid Of an acquaintance made adventurously."	

"I let you say that—on consideration."	
"I don't see very well how you can help it. You want the truth. I speak but by the voices. You see they know I haven't had your name, Though what a name should matter between us——"	155
"I shall suspect——"	
"Be good. The voices say: Call her Nausicaä, and take a timber That you shall find lies in the cellar, charred Among the raspberries, and hew and shape it For a doorsill or other corner piece	160
In a new cottage on the ancient spot.  The life is not yet all gone out of it.  And come and make your summer dwelling here,  And perhaps she will come, still unafraid,  And sit before you in the open door  With flowers in her lap until they fade,  But not come in across the sacred sill——"	165
"I wonder where your oracle is tending. You can see that there's something wrong with it, Or it would speak in dialect. Whose voice Does it purport to speak in? Not old Grandsir's Nor Granny's, surely. Call up one of them. They have best right to be heard in this place."	175
"You seem so partial to our great-grandmother (Nine times removed. Correct me if I err.) You will be likely to regard as sacred Anything she may say. But let me warn you, Folks in her day were given to plain speaking. You think you'd best tempt her at such a time?"	180

"It rests with us always to cut her off." "Well then, it's Granny speaking: 'I dunnow! Mebbe I'm wrong to take it as I do. 185 There ain't no names quite like the old ones, though, Nor never will be to my way of thinking. One mustn't bear too hard on the newcomers. But there's a dite too many of them for comfort. I should feel easier if I could see 190 More of the salt wherewith they're to be salted. Son, you do as you're told! You take the timber— It's as sound as the day when it was cut— And begin over——' There, she'd better stop. You can see what is troubling Granny, though. 195 But don't you think we sometimes make too much Of the old stock? What counts is the ideals, And those will bear some keeping still about." "I can see we are going to be good friends." "I like your 'going to be.' You said just now 200 It's going to rain.' "I know, and it was raining. I let you say all that. But I must go now." "You let me say it? on consideration? How shall we say good-by in such a case?" "How shall we?" "Will you leave the way to me?" 205 "No, I don't trust your eyes. You've said enough. Now give me your hand up.—Pick me that flower." "Where shall we meet again?"

"Nowhere but here

Once more before we meet elsewhere."

"In rain?"

"It ought to be in rain. Sometime in rain. In rain tomorrow, shall we, if it rains? But if we must, in sunshine." So she went.

210

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### THE HOUSEKEEPER

I let myself in at the kitchen door.

"It's you," she said. "I can't get up. Forgive me Not answering your knock. I can no more Let people in than I can keep them out. I'm getting too old for my size, I tell them. My fingers are about all I've the use of So's to take any comfort. I can sew: I help out with this beadwork what I can."

"That's a smart pair of pumps you're beading there. Who are they for?"

"You mean?—oh, for some miss. 10 I can't keep track of other people's daughters.

Lord, if I were to dream of everyone
Whose shoes I primped to dance in!"

"And where's John?"

"Haven't you seen him? Strange what set you off
To come to his house when he's gone to yours.

You can't have passed each other. I know what:
He must have changed his mind and gone to Garland's.
He won't be long in that case. You can wait.
Though what good you can be, or anyone—

It's gone so far. You've heard? Estelle's run off." 20 "Yes, what's it all about? When did she go?" "Two weeks since." "She's in earnest, it appears." "I'm sure she won't come back. She's hiding somewhere. I don't know where myself. John thinks I do. He thinks I only have to say the word, 25 And she'll come back. But, bless you, I'm her mother— I can't talk to her, and, Lord, if I could!" "It will go hard with John. What will he do? He can't find anyone to take her place." "Oh, if you ask me that, what will he do? 30 He gets some sort of bakeshop meals together, With me to sit and tell him everything. What's wanted and how much and where it is.

What's wanted and how much and where it is.
But when I'm gone—of course I can't stay here:
Estelle's to take me when she's settled down.
He and I only hinder one another.
I tell them they can't get me through the door, though:
I've been built in here like a big church organ.
We've been here fifteen years."

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"That's a long time
To live together and then pull apart.
How do you see him living when you're gone?
Two of you out will leave an empty house."

"I don't just see him living many years, Left here with nothing but the furniture. I hate to think of the old place when we're gone, With the brook going by below the yard,

And no one here but hens blowing about. If he could sell the place, but then, he can't: No one will ever live on it again. It's too run down. This is the last of it. 50 What I think he will do, is let things smash. He'll sort of swear the time away. He's awful! I never saw a man let family troubles Make so much difference in his man's affairs. He's just dropped everything. He's like a child. 55 I blame his being brought up by his mother. He's got hay down that's been rained on three times. He hoed a little vesterday for me: I thought the growing things would do him good. Something went wrong. I saw him throw the hoe 60 Sky-high with both hands. I can see it now— Come here—I'll show you—in that apple tree. That's no way for a man to do at his age: He's fifty-five, you know, if he's a day." "Aren't you afraid of him? What's that gun for?" 65 "Oh, that's been there for hawks since chicken-time. John Hall touch me! Not if he knows his friends. I'll say that for him, John's no threatener Like some menfolk. No one's afraid of him: All is, he's made up his mind not to stand 70 What he has got to stand."

"Where is Estelle? Couldn't one talk to her? What does she say? You say you don't know where she is."

"Nor want to! She thinks if it was bad to live with him, It must be right to leave him."

"Which is wrong!" 75
"Yes, but he should have married her."
"I know."
"The strain's been too much for her all these years: I can't explain it any other way. It's different with a man, at least with John: He knows he's kinder than the run of men. Better than married ought to be as good As married—that's what he has always said. I know the way he's felt—but all the same!"
"I wonder why he doesn't marry her And end it."
"Too late now: she wouldn't have him.  He's given her time to think of something else.  That's his mistake. The dear knows my interest  Has been to keep the thing from breaking up.  This is a good home: I don't ask for better.  But when I've said, Why shouldn't they be married?  He'd say, Why should they?—no more words than that."
"And after all why should they? John's been fair I take it. What was his was always hers. There was no quarrel about property."
"Reason enough, there was no property.  A friend or two as good as own the farm, Such as it is. It isn't worth the mortgage."
"I mean Estelle has always held the purse."
"The rights of that are harder to get at.  I guess Estelle and I have filled the purse.  Twas we let him have money, not he us.

John's a bad farmer. I'm not blaming him. Take it year in, year out, he doesn't make much. We came here for a home for me, you know, Estelle to do the housework for the board 105 Of both of us. But look how it turns out: She seems to have the housework, and besides, Half of the outdoor work, though as for that, He'd say she does it more because she likes it. You see our pretty things are all outdoors. 110 Our hens and cows and pigs are always better Than folks like us have any business with. Farmers around twice as well off as we Haven't as good. They don't go with the farm. One thing you can't help liking about John, 115 He's fond of nice things—too fond, some would say. But Estelle don't complain: she's like him there. She wants our hens to be the best there are. You never saw this room before a show. Full of lank, shivery, half-drowned birds 120 In separate coops, having their plumage done. The smell of the wet feathers in the heat! You spoke of John's not being safe to stay with. You don't know what a gentle lot we are: We wouldn't hurt a hen! You ought to see us 125 Moving a flock of hens from place to place. We're not allowed to take them upside down, All we can hold together by the legs. Two at a time's the rule, one on each arm, No matter how far and how many times 130 We have to go."

"You mean that's John's idea."

<sup>&</sup>quot;And we live up to it; or I don't know

What childishness he wouldn't give way to.

He manages to keep the upper hand
On his own farm. He's boss. But as to hens:

We fence our flowers in and the hens range.

Nothing's too good for them. We say it pays.

John likes to tell the offers he has had,
Twenty for this cock, twenty-five for that.

He never takes the money. If they're worth
That much to sell, they're worth as much to keep.

Bless you, it's all expense, though. Reach me down
The little tin box on the cupboard shelf—
The upper shelf, the tin box. That's the one.

I'll show you. Here you are."

"What's this?"

"A bill— 145

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For fifty dollars for one Langshang cock—Receipted. And the cock is in the yard."

"Not in a glass case, then?"

"He'd need a tall one:

He can eat off a barrel from the ground.
He's been in a glass case, as you may say,
The Crystal Palace, London. He's imported.
John bought him, and we paid the bill with beads—
Wampum, I call it. Mind, we don't complain.
But you see, don't you, we take care of him."

"And like it, too. It makes it all the worse."

"It seems as if. And that's not all: he's helpless In ways that I can hardly tell you of. Sometimes he gets possessed to keep accounts To see where all the money goes so fast.

. 1 :Il La midianlane	160
You know how men will be ridiculous. But it's just fun the way he gets bedeviled— If he's untidy now, what will he be——?"	
"It makes it all the worse. You must be blind."	
"Estelle's the one. You needn't talk to me."	
"Can't you and I get to the root of it? What's the real trouble? What will satisfy her?"	165
"It's as I say: she's turned from him, that's all."	
"But why, when she's well off? Is it the neighbors, Being cut off from friends?"	
"We have our friends.	
That isn't it. Folks aren't afraid of us."	170
"She's let it worry her. You stood the strain, And you're her mother."	
"But I didn't always.	
I didn't relish it along at first.	
But I got wonted to it. And besides—	
John said I was too old to have grandchildren.	175
But what's the use of talking when it's done?	
She won't come back—it's worse than that—she can't."	
"Why do you speak like that? What do you know? What do you mean?—she's done harm to herself?"	
"I mean she's married—married someone else."	180
"Oho, oho!"	
"You don't believe me."	
"Yes, I do,	
Only too well. I knew there must be something!	
,	

So that was what was back. She's bad, that's all!"	
"Bad to get married when she had the chance?"	184
"Nonsense! See what she's done! But who, but who-	_?"
"Who'd marry her straight out of such a mess? Say it right out—no matter for her mother. The man was found. I'd better name no names. John himself won't imagine who he is."	
"Then it's all up. I think I'll get away. You'll be expecting John. I pity Estelle; I suppose she deserves some pity, too. You ought to have the kitchen to yourself To break it to him. You may have the job."	190
"You needn't think you're going to get away. John's almost here. I've had my eye on someone Coming down Ryan's Hill. I thought 'twas him. Here he is now. This box! Put it away. And this bill."	195
"What's the hurry? He'll unhitch."	
"No, he won't, either. He'll just drop the reins And turn Doll out to pasture, rig and all. She won't get far before the wheels hang up On something—there's no harm. See, there he is! My, but he looks as if he must have heard!"	200
John threw the door wide but he didn't enter. "How are you, neighbor? Just the man I'm after. Isn't it Hell?" he said. "I want to know. Come out here if you want to hear me talk.— I'll talk to you, old woman, afterward.—	205
I've got some news that maybe isn't news.	210

What are they trying to do to me, these two?"

"Do go along with him and stop his shouting."

She raised her voice against the closing door:

"Who wants to hear your news, you—dreadful fool?"

#### THE FEAR

A lantern-light from deeper in the barn
Shone on a man and woman in the door
And threw their lurching shadows on a house
Nearby, all dark in every glossy window.
A horse's hoof pawed once the hollow floor,
And the back of the gig they stood beside
Moved in a little. The man grasped a wheel.
The woman spoke out sharply, "Whoa, stand still!—
I saw it just as plain as a white plate,"
She said, "as the light on the dashboard ran
Along the bushes at the roadside—a man's face.
You must have seen it too."

"I didn't see it.

Are you sure-"

"Yes, I'm sure!"

"-it was a face?"

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"Joel, I'll have to look. I can't go in,
I can't, and leave a thing like that unsettled.

Doors locked and curtains drawn will make no difference.
I always have felt strange when we came home
To the dark house after so long an absence,
And the key rattled loudly into place
Seemed to warn someone to be getting out
At one door as we entered at another.

What if I'm right, and someone all the time—Don't hold my arm!"

"I say it's someone passing."

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"You speak as if this were a traveled road. You forget where we are. What is beyond That he'd be going to or coming from At such an hour of night, and on foot too? What was he standing still for in the bushes?"

"It's not so very late—it's only dark.
There's more in it than you're inclined to say.
Did he look like——?"

"He looked like anyone.
I'll never rest tonight unless I know.
Give me the lantern."

"You don't want the lantern."

She pushed past him and got it for herself.

"You're not to come," she said. "This is my business. If the time's come to face it, I'm the one To put it the right way. He'd never dare—Listen! He kicked a stone. Hear that, hear that! He's coming towards us. Joel, go in—please. Hark!—I don't hear him now. But please go in."

"In the first place you can't make me believe it's——"

"It is—or someone else he's sent to watch. And now's the time to have it out with him While we know definitely where he is. Let him get off and he'll be everywhere Around us, looking out of trees and bushes Till I shan't dare to set a foot outdoors.

And I can't stand it. Joel, let me go!"	
"But it's nonsense to think he'd care enough."	
"You mean you couldn't understand his caring. Oh, but you see he hadn't had enough— Joel, I won't—I won't—I promise you. We mustn't say hard things. You mustn't either."	50
"I'll be the one, if anybody goes! But you give him the advantage with this light. What couldn't he do to us standing here! And if to see was what he wanted, why, He has seen all there was to see and gone."	55
He appeared to forget to keep his hold, But advanced with her as she crossed the grass.	60
"What do you want?" she cried to all the dark. She stretched up tall to overlook the light That hung in both hands, hot against her skirt.	
"There's no one; so you're wrong," he said.	
"There is.— What do you want?" she cried, and then herself Was startled when an answer really came.	65
"Nothing." It came from well along the road.	
She reached a hand to Joel for support: The smell of scorching woolen made her faint. "What are you doing round this house at night?"	70
"Nothing." A pause: there seemed no more to say.	
And then the voice again: "You seem afraid. I saw by the way you whipped up the horse. I'll just come forward in the lantern-light	

And let you see."

"Yes, do.—Joel, go back!"

75

She stood her ground against the noisy steps That came on, but her body rocked a little.

"You see," the voice said.

"Oh." She looked and looked.

"You don't see—I've a child here by the hand. A robber wouldn't have his family with him."

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"What's a child doing at this time of night-?"

"Out walking. Every child should have the memory Of at least one long-after-bedtime walk. What, son?"

"Then I should think you'd try to find Somewhere to walk——"

84

"The highway, as it happens—We're stopping for the fortnight down at Dean's."

"But if that's all—Joel—you realize—
You won't think anything. You understand?
You understand that we have to be careful.
This is a very, very lonely place.—
Joel!" She spoke as if she couldn't turn.
The swinging lantern lengthened to the ground,
It touched, it struck, it clattered and went out.

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#### THE SELF-SEEKER

"Willis, I didn't want you here today: The lawyer's coming for the company. I'm going to sell my soul, or rather, feet.

Five hundred dollars for the pair, you know."	
"With you the feet have nearly been the soul; And if you're going to sell them to the devil, I want to see you do it. When's he coming?"	:
"I half suspect you knew, and came on purpose To try to help me drive a better bargain."	
"Well, if it's true! Yours are no common feet. The lawyer don't know what it is he's buying: So many miles you might have walked you won't walk. You haven't run your forty orchids down. What does he think?—How are the blessed feet? The doctor's sure you're going to walk again?"	10
"He thinks I'll hobble. It's both legs and feet."	
"They must be terrible—I mean, to look at."	
"I haven't dared to look at them uncovered. Through the bed blankets I remind myself Of a starfish laid out with rigid points."	20
"The wonder is it hadn't been your head."	
"It's hard to tell you how I managed it. When I saw the shaft had me by the coat, I didn't try too long to pull away, Or fumble for my knife to cut away, I just embraced the shaft and rode it out— Till Weiss shut off the water in the wheel pit. That's how I think I didn't lose my head. But my legs got their knocks against the ceiling."	2!
"Awful. Why didn't they throw off the belt Instead of going clear down in the wheel pit?"	30

"They say some time was wasted on the belt—Old streak of leather—doesn't love me much Because I make him spit fire at my knuckles, The way Ben Franklin used to make the kite string. That must be it. Some days he won't stay on. That day a woman couldn't coax him off. He's on his rounds now with his tail in his mouth, Snatched right and left across the silver pulleys. Everything goes the same without me there. You can hear the small buzz saws whine, the big saw Caterwaul to the hills around the village As they both bite the wood. It's all our music. One ought as a good villager to like it. No doubt it has a sort of prosperous sound, And it's our life."

"Yes, when it's not our death."

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"You make that sound as if it wasn't so With everything. What we live by we die by.— I wonder where my lawyer is. His train's in. I want this over with; I'm hot and tired."

"You're getting ready to do something foolish."

"Watch for him, will you, Will? You let him in. I'd rather Mrs. Corbin didn't know; I've boarded here so long, she thinks she owns me. You're bad enough to manage, without her."

"I'm going to be worse instead of better. You've got to tell me how far this is gone: Have you agreed to any price?"

"Five hundred. Five hundred—five—five! One, two, three, four, five.

"I don't believe you."	60
"I told you, Willis, when you first came in. Don't you be hard on me. I have to take What I can get. You see they have the feet, Which gives them the advantage in the trade. I can't get back the feet in any case."	65
"But your flowers, man, you're selling out your flowers."	
"Yes, that's one way to put it—all the flowers Of every kind everywhere in this region For the next forty summers—call it forty.	
But I'm not selling those, I'm giving them;	70
They never earned me so much as one cent:  Money can't pay me for the loss of them.  No, the five hundred was the sum they named  To pay the doctor's bill and tide me over.	
It's that or fight, and I don't want to fight— I just want to get settled in my life, Such as it's going to be, and know the worst, Or best—it may not be so bad. The firm Promise me all the shooks I want to nail."	75
"But what about your flora of the valley?"	80
"You have me there. But that—you didn't think That was worth money to me? Still I own It goes against me not to finish it For the friends it might bring me. By the way,	
I had a letter from Burroughs—did I tell you?— About my Cypripedium reginæ; He says it's not reported so far north.— There! there's the bell. He's rung. But you go down	85

And bring him up, and don't let Mrs. Corbin.— Oh, well, we'll soon be through with it. I'm tired." 90 Willis brought up besides the Boston lawyer A little barefoot girl, who in the noise Of heavy footsteps in the old frame house. And baritone importance of the lawyer, Stood for a while unnoticed, with her hands 95 Shyly behind her. "Well, and how is Mister . . . ?" The lawyer was already in his satchel As if for papers that might bear the name He hadn't at command. "You must excuse me, I dropped in at the mill and was detained." 100 "Looking round, I suppose," said Willis. "Yes, Well, yes." "Hear anything that might prove useful?" The Broken One saw Anne. "Why, here is Anne. What do you want, dear? Come, stand by the bed; Tell me what is it?" Anne just wagged her dress, 105 With both hands held behind her. "Guess," she said. "Oh, guess which hand? My, my! Once on a time I knew a lovely way to tell for certain By looking in the ears. But I forget it. Er, let me see. I think I'll take the right. 110 That's sure to be right, even if it's wrong. Come, hold it out. Don't change.—A Ram's Horn orchid!

A Ram's Horn! What would I have got, I wonder,

If I had chosen left. Hold out the left. Another Ram's Horn! Where did you find those, 115 Under what beech tree, on what woodchuck's knoll?" Anne looked at the large lawyer at her side, And thought she wouldn't venture on so much. "Were there no others?" "There were four or five. I knew you wouldn't let me pick them all." 120 "I wouldn't—so I wouldn't. You're the girl! You see Anne has her lesson learned by heart." "I wanted there should be some there next year." "Of course you did. You left the rest for seed. And for the backwoods woodchuck. You're the girl! 125 A Ram's Horn orchid seedpod for a woodchuck Sounds something like. Better than farmer's beans To a discriminating appetite, Though the Ram's Horn is seldom to be had In bushel lots—doesn't come on the market. 130 But, Anne, I'm troubled; have you told me all? You're hiding something. That's as bad as lying. You ask this lawyer man. And it's not safe With a lawyer at hand to find you out. Nothing is hidden from some people, Anne. 135 You don't tell me that where you found a Ram's Horn You didn't find a Yellow Lady's Slipper. What did I tell you? What? I'd blush, I would. Don't you defend yourself. If it was there. Where is it now, the Yellow Lady's Slipper?" 140 "Well, wait—it's common—it's too common."

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"Common?

The Purple Lady's Slipper's commoner."	
"I didn't bring a Purple Lady's Slipper. To You—to you I mean—they're both too common."	
The lawyer gave a laugh among his papers As if with some idea that she had scored.	145
"I've broken Anne of gathering bouquets.  It's not fair to the child. It can't be helped, though: Pressed into service means pressed out of shape.  Somehow I'll make it right with her—she'll see.  She's going to do my scouting in the field,  Over stone walls and all along a wood  And by a river bank for water flowers,  The Floating Heart, with small leaf like a heart,  And at the sinus under water a fist  Of little fingers all kept down but one,  And that thrust up to blossom in the sun  As if to say, 'You! You're the Heart's desire.'  Anne has a way with flowers to take the place  Of what she's lost: she goes down on one knee  And lifts their faces by the chin to hers	150 155
And says their names, and leaves them where they are." The lawyer wore a watch the case of which Was cunningly devised to make a noise Like a small pistol when he snapped it shut At such a time as this. He snapped it now.	165
"Well, Anne, go, dearie. Our affair will wait. The lawyer man is thinking of his train. He wants to give me lots and lots of money Before he goes, because I hurt myself, And it may take him I don't know how long.	170

But put our flowers in water first.—Will, help her: The pitcher's too full for her.—There's no cup? Just hook them on the inside of the pitcher.	
Now run.—Get out your documents! You see I have to keep on the good side of Anne. I'm a great boy to think of number one. And you can't blame me in the place I'm in. Who will take care of my necessities Unless I do?"	175
"A pretty interlude," The lawyer said. "I'm sorry, but my train— Luckily terms are all agreed upon. You only have to sign your name. Right—there."	180
"You, Will, stop making faces. Come round here Where you can't make them. What is it you want? I'll put you out with Anne. Be good or go."	185
"You don't mean you will sign that thing unread?"	
"Make yourself useful, then, and read it for me.— Isn't it something I have seen before?"	
"You'll find it is. Let your friend look at it."	190
"Yes, but all that takes time, and I'm as much In haste to get it over with as you.— But read it, read it.—That's right, draw the curtain: Half the time I don't know what's troubling me.—	
What do you say, Will? Don't you be a fool, You, crumpling folks's legal documents. Out with it if you've any real objection."	195
"Five hundred dollars!"	

"What would you think right?"

"A thousand wouldn't be a cent too much; You know it, Mr. Lawyer. The sin is Accepting anything before he knows Whether he's ever going to walk again. It smells to me like a dishonest trick."	200
"I think—I think—from what I heard today— And saw myself—he would be ill-advised——"	205
"What did you hear, for instance?" Willis said.	
"Now, the place where the accident occurred——"	
The Broken One was twisted in his bed.  "This is between you two apparently.  Where I come in is what I want to know.  You stand up to it like a pair of cocks.  Go outdoors if you want to fight. Spare me.  When you come back, I'll have the papers signed.  Will pencil do? Then, please, your fountain pen.  One of you hold my head up from the pillow."	210
Willis flung off the bed. "I wash my hands— I'm no match—no, and don't pretend to be——"	
The lawyer gravely capped his fountain pen. "You're doing the wise thing: you won't regret it. We're very sorry for you."	
Willis sneered: "Who's we?—some stockholders in Boston? I'll go outdoors, by gad, and won't come back."	220
"Willis, bring Anne back with you when you come. Yes. Thanks for caring.—Don't mind Will: he's savage. He thinks you ought to pay me for my flowers. You don't know what I mean about the flowers.	225

Don't stop to try to now. You'll miss your train. Good-by." He flung his arms around his face.

#### THE WOOD-PILE

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Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day, I paused and said, "I will turn back from here. No. I will go on farther—and we shall see." The hard snow held me, save where now and then One foot went through. The view was all in lines Straight up and down of tall slim-trees Too much alike to mark or name a place by So as to say for certain I was here Or somewhere else: I was just far from home. A small bird flew before me. He was careful To put a tree between us when he lighted, And say no word to tell me who he was Who was so foolish as to think what he thought. He thought that I was after him for a feather— The white one in his tail; like one who takes Everything said as personal to himself. One flight out sideways would have undeceived him. And then there was a pile of wood for which I forgot him and let his little fear Carry him off the way I might have gone, Without so much as wishing him good-night. He went behind it to make his last stand. It was a cord of maple, cut and split And piled—and measured, four by four by eight. And not another like it could I see. No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it. And it was older sure than this year's cutting, Or even last year's or the year's before.

The wood was gray and the bark warping off it	
And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis	30
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.	30
What held it, though, on one side was a tree	
Still growing, and on one a stake and prop,	
These latter about to fall. I thought that only	
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks	35
Could so forget his handiwork on which	3)
He spent himself, the labor of his ax,	
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace	
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could	
With the slow smokeless burning of decay.	
ville slow shokeless burning of decay.	40

#### **GOOD HOURS**

I had for my winter evening walk—No one at all with whom to talk,
But I had the cottages in a row
Up to their shining eyes in snow.

And I thought I had the folk within: I had the sound of a violin; I had a glimpse through curtain laces Of youthful forms and youthful faces.

I had such company outward bound. I went till there were no cottages found. I turned and repented, but coming back I saw no window but that was black.

Over the snow my creaking feet
Disturbed the slumbering village street
Like profanation, by your leave,
At ten o'clock of a winter eve.

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#### THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,	
And sorry I could not travel both	
And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could	
To where it bent in the undergrowth;	5
Then took the other, as just as fair,	
And having perhaps the better claim,	
Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that, the passing there	
Had worn them really about the same,	10
And both that morning equally lay	
In leaves no step had trodden black.	
Oh, I kept the first for another day!	
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,	
I doubted if I should ever come back.	15
I shall be telling this with a sigh	
Somewhere ages and ages hence:	
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—	
I took the one less traveled by,	
And that has made all the difference.	20

#### **CHRISTMAS TREES**

A Christmas circular letter

The city had withdrawn into itself And left at last the country to the country;

When between whirls of snow not come to lie	
And whirls of foliage not yet laid, there drove	
A stranger to our yard, who looked the city,	5
Yet did in country fashion in that there	
He sat and waited till he drew us out,	
A-buttoning coats, to ask him who he was.	
He proved to be the city come again	
To look for something it had left behind	10
And could not do without and keep its Christmas.	
He asked if I would sell my Christmas trees;	
My woods—the young fir balsams like a place	
Where houses all are churches and have spires.	
I hadn't thought of them as Christmas trees.	15
I doubt if I was tempted for a moment	
To sell them off their feet to go in cars	
And leave the slope behind the house all bare,	
Where the sun shines now no warmer than the moon.	
I'd hate to have them know it if I was.	20
Yet more I'd hate to hold my trees, except	
As others hold theirs or refuse for them,	
Beyond the time of profitable growth—	
The trial by market everything must come to.	
I dallied so much with the thought of selling.	25
Then whether from mistaken courtesy	
And fear of seeming short of speech, or whether	
From hope of hearing good of what was mine,	
I said, "There aren't enough to be worth while."	
"I could soon tell how many they would cut,	30
You let me look them over."	
"You could look	

But don't expect I'm going to let you have them."

Pasture they spring in, some in clumps too close That lop each other of boughs, but not a few Quite solitary and having equal boughs All round and round. The latter he nodded "Yes" to, Or paused to say beneath some lovelier one, With a buyer's moderation, "That would do." I thought so too, but wasn't there to say so. We climbed the pasture on the south, crossed over, And came down on the north.	<b>35</b>
He said, "A thousand."	
"A thousand Christmas trees!—at what apiece?"	
He felt some need of softening that to me: "A thousand trees would come to thirty dollars."	
Then I was certain I had never meant To let him have them. Never show surprise! But thirty dollars seemed so small beside The extent of pasture I should strip, three cents (For that was all they figured out apiece)— Three cents so small beside the dollar friends	45 50
I should be writing to within the hour Would pay in cities for good trees like those, Regular vestry-trees whole Sunday Schools Could hang enough on to pick off enough.	,,,
A thousand Christmas trees I didn't know I had! Worth three cents more to give away than sell, As may be shown by a simple calculation. Too bad I couldn't lay one in a letter. I can't help wishing I could send you one	55
In wishing you herewith a Merry Christmas.	60

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#### AN OLD MAN'S WINTER NIGHT

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All out-of-doors looked darkly in at him Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars, That gathers on the pane in empty rooms. What kept his eyes from giving back the gaze Was the lamp tilted near them in his hand. What kept him from remembering what it was That brought him to that creaking room was age. He stood with barrels round him—at a loss. And having scared the cellar under him In clomping here, he scared it once again In clomping off—and scared the outer night, Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar Of trees and crack of branches, common things, But nothing so like beating on a box. A light he was to no one but himself Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what, A quiet light, and then not even that. He consigned to the moon—such as she was, So late-arising—to the broken moon, As better than the sun in any case For such a charge, his snow upon the roof, His icicles along the wall to keep; And slept. The log that shifted with a jolt Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted, And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept. One aged man—one man—can't keep a house, A farm, a countryside, or if he can, It's thus he does it of a winter night.

### THE EXPOSED NEST

You were forever finding some new play.	
So when I saw you down on hands and knees	
In the meadow, busy with the new-cut hay,	
Trying, I thought, to set it up on end,	
I went to show you how to make it stay,	5
If that was your idea, against the breeze,	
And, if you asked me, even help pretend	
To make it root again and grow afresh.	
But 'twas no make-believe with you today,	
Nor was the grass itself your real concern,	10
Though I found your hand full of wilted fern,	
Steel-bright June-grass, and blackening heads of clover.	
Twas a nest full of young birds on the ground	
The cutter bar had just gone champing over	
(Miraculously without tasting flesh)	15
And left defenseless to the heat and light.	
You wanted to restore them to their right	
Of something interposed between their sight	
And too much world at once—could means be found.	
The way the nest-full every time we stirred	20
Stood up to us as to a mother-bird	
Whose coming home has been too long deferred,	
Made me ask would the mother-bird return	
And care for them in such a change of scene,	
And might our meddling make her more afraid.	25
That was a thing we could not wait to learn.	
We saw the risk we took in doing good,	
But dared not spare to do the best we could	
Though harm should come of it; so built the screen	
You had begun, and gave them back their shade.	30
All this to prove we cared. Why is there then	

No more to tell? We turned to other things. I haven't any memory—have you?—
Of ever coming to the place again
To see if the birds lived the first night through,
And so at last to learn to use their wings.

#### A PATCH OF OLD SNOW

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There's a patch of old snow in a corner,
That I should have guessed
Was a blow-away paper the rain
Had brought to rest.

It is speckled with grime as if
Small print overspread it,
The news of a day I've forgotten—
If I ever read it.

#### IN THE HOME STRETCH

She stood against the kitchen sink, and looked Over the sink out through a dusty window At weeds the water from the sink made tall. She wore her cape; her hat was in her hand. Behind her was confusion in the room, Of chairs turned upside down to sit like people In other chairs, and something, come to look, For every room a house has—parlor, bedroom, And dining room—thrown pell-mell in the kitchen. And now and then a smudged, infernal face Looked in a door behind her and addressed Her back. She always answered without turning.

"Where will I put this walnut bureau, lady?"

"Put it on top of something that's on top Of something else," she laughed. "Oh, put it where You can tonight, and go. It's almost dark; You must be getting started back to town."	15
Another blackened face thrust in and looked And smiled, and when she did not turn, spoke gently, "What are you seeing out the window, lady?"	·20
"Never was I beladied so before. Would evidence of having been called lady More than so many times make me a lady In common law, I wonder."	
"But I ask, What are you seeing out the window, lady?"	25
What are you seeing out the window, lady:	2)
"What I'll be seeing more of in the years To come as here I stand and go the round Of many plates with towels many times."	
"And what is that? You only put me off."	
"Rank weeds that love the water from the dishpan More than some women like the dishpan, Joe; A little stretch of mowing field for you; Not much of that until I come to woods That end all. And it's scarce enough to call A view."	30
"And yet you think you like it, dear?"	35
"That's what you're so concerned to know! You hope I like it.—Bang goes something big away Off there upstairs. The very tread of men As great as those is shattering to the frame	
Of such a little house. Once left alone, You and I, dear, will go with softer steps	40

Up and down stairs and through the rooms, and none But sudden winds that snatch them from our hands Will ever slam the doors."

"I think you see More than you like to own to out that window."

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"No; for besides the things I tell you of, I only see the years. They come and go In alternation with the weeds, the field, The wood."

"What kind of years?"

"Why, latter years-

Different from early years."

"I see them, too.

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You didn't count them?"

"No, the further off

So ran together that I didn't try to. It can scarce be that they would be in number

We'd care to know, for we are not young now.—
And bang goes something else away off there.

It sounds as if it were the men went down, And every crash meant one less to return To lighted city streets we, too, have known,

But now are giving up for country darkness."

"Come from that window where you see too much, And take a livelier view of things from here.

They're going. Watch this husky swarming up Over the wheel into the sky-high seat,

Lighting his pipe now, squinting down his nose At the flame burning downward as he sucks it."

"See how it makes his nose-side bright, a proof

How dark it's getting. Can you tell what time	
It is by that? Or by the moon? The new moon!	
What shoulder did I see her over? Neither.	
A wire she is of silver, as new as we	70
To everything. Her light won't last us long.	
It's something, though, to know we're going to have her	
Night after night and stronger every night	
To see us through our first two weeks. But, Joe,	
The stove! Before they go! Knock on the window;	75
Ask them to help you get it on its feet.	
We stand here dreaming. Hurry! Call them back!"	
"They're not gone yet."	
"We've got to have the stove,	
Whatever else we want for. And a light.	
Have we a piece of candle if the lamp	80
And oil are buried out of reach?"	
Again	
The house was full of tramping, and the dark,	
Door-filling men burst in and seized the stove.	
A cannon-mouth-like hole was in the wall,	
To which they set it true by eye; and then	85
Came up the jointed stovepipe in their hands,	0,
So much too light and airy for their strength	
It almost seemed to come ballooning up,	
Slipping from clumsy clutches toward the ceiling.	
"A fit!" said one, and banged a stovepipe shoulder.	00
"It's good luck when you move in to begin	90
With good luck with your stovepipe. Never mind,	
It's not so bad in the country, settled down,	
When people're getting on in life. You'll like it."	
Joe said: "You big boys ought to find a farm	95

And make good farmers, and leave other fellows The city work to do. There's not enough For everybody as it is in there." "God!" one said wildly, and, when no one spoke: "Say that to Jimmy here. He needs a farm." 100 But Jimmy only made his jaw recede Fool-like, and rolled his eyes as if to say He saw himself a farmer. Then there was a French boy Who said with seriousness that made them laugh, "Ma friend, you ain't know what it is you're ask." 105 He doffed his cap and held it with both hands Across his chest to make as 'twere a bow: "We're giving you our chances on de farm." And then they all turned to with deafening boots And put each other bodily out of the house. 110 "Good-by to them! We puzzle them. They think— I don't know what they think we see in what They leave us to: that pasture slope that seems The back some farm presents us; and your woods To northward from your window at the sink. 115 Waiting to steal a step on us whenever We drop our eyes or turn to other things, As in the game 'ten-step' the children play." "Good boys they seemed, and let them love the city. All they could say was 'God!' when you proposed 120 Their coming out and making useful farmers." "Did they make something lonesome go through you? It would take more than them to sicken you—

114

125

Us of our bargain. But they left us so

They almost shook me."

As to our fate, like fools past reasoning with.

"It's all so much	
What we have always wanted, I confess	
Its seeming bad for a moment makes it seem	
Even worse still, and so on down, down, down.	
It's nothing; it's their leaving us at dusk.	130
I never bore it well when people went.	
The first night after guests have gone, the house	
Seems haunted or exposed. I always take	
A personal interest in the locking up	
At bedtime; but the strangeness soon wears off."	135
He fetched a dingy lantern from behind	
A door. "There's that we didn't lose! And these!"—	
Some matches he unpocketed. "For food—	
The meals we've had no one can take from us.	
I wish that everything on earth were just	140
As certain as the meals we've had. I wish	
The meals we haven't had were, anyway.	
What have you you know where to lay your hands on?"	
"The bread we bought in passing at the store.	
There's butter somewhere, too."	
"Let's rend the bread.	145
I'll light the fire for company for you;	147
You'll not have any other company	
Till Ed begins to get out on a Sunday	
To look us over and give us his idea	
Of what wants pruning, shingling, breaking up.	150
He'll know what he would do if he were we,	150
And all at once. He'll plan for us and plan	
To help us, but he'll take it out in planning.	
Well, you can set the table with the loaf.	
Let's see you find your loaf. I'll light the fire.	155
l like chairs occupying other chairs	1))

Not offering a lady——"

"There again, Joe!

You're tired."

"I'm drunk-nonsensical tired out; Don't mind a word I say. It's a day's work To empty one house of all household goods And fill another with 'em fifteen miles away, Although you do no more than dump them down."

160

"Dumped down in paradise we are and happy."

"It's all so much what I have always wanted, I can't believe it's what you wanted, too."

165

"Shouldn't you like to know?"

"I'd like to know

If it is what you wanted, then how much You wanted it for me."

"A troubled conscience!

You don't want me to tell if I don't know."

"I don't want to find out what can't be known.

170

But who first said the word to come?"

"My dear,

It's who first thought the thought. You're searching, Joe, For things that don't exist; I mean beginnings. Ends and beginnings—there are no such things. There are only middles."

"What is this?"

"This life? 175

Our sitting here by lantern-light together Amid the wreckage of a former home? You won't deny the lantern isn't new.

The stove is not, and you are not to me, Nor I to you."

"Perhaps you never were?"

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"It would take me forever to recite All that's not new in where we find ourselves. New is a word for fools in towns who think Style upon style in dress and thought at last Must get somewhere. I've heard you say as much. No, this is no beginning."

185

"Then an end?"

"End is a gloomy word."

"Is it too late

To drag you out for just a good-night call On the old peach trees on the knoll, to grope By starlight in the grass for a last peach The neighbors may not have taken as their right When the house wasn't lived in? I've been looking: I doubt if they have left us many grapes. Before we set ourselves to right the house, The first thing in the morning, out we go To go the round of apple, cherry, peach, Pine, alder, pasture, mowing, well, and brook. All of a farm it is."

190

195

"I know this much:

I'm going to put you in your bed, if first I have to make you build it. Come, the light."

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When there was no more lantern in the kitchen, The fire got out through crannies in the stove And danced in yellow wrigglers on the ceiling, As much at home as if they'd always danced there.

#### THE TELEPHONE

"When I was just as far as I could walk From here today, There was an hour All still When leaning with my head against a flower 5 I heard you talk. Don't say I didn't, for I heard you say-You spoke from that flower on the windowsill— Do you remember what it was you said?" "First tell me what it was you thought you heard." 10 "Having found the flower and driven a bee away, I leaned my head, And holding by the stalk, I listened and I thought I caught the word— What was it? Did you call me by my name? 15 Or did you say-Someone said 'Come'—I heard it as I bowed." "I may have thought as much, but not aloud." "Well, so I came."

#### MEETING AND PASSING

As I went down the hill along the wall
There was a gate I had leaned at for the view
And had just turned from when I first saw you
As you came up the hill. We met. But all
We did that day was mingle great and small
Footprints in summer dust as if we drew
The figure of our being less than two

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But more than one as yet. Your parasol Pointed the decimal off with one deep thrust. And all the time we talked you seemed to see Something down there to smile at in the dust. (Oh, it was without prejudice to me!) Afterward I went past what you had passed Before we met, and you what I had passed.

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#### HYLA BROOK

By June our brook's run out of song and speed. Sought for much after that, it will be found Either to have gone groping underground (And taken with it all the Hyla breed That shouted in the mist a month ago, Like ghost of sleigh bells in a ghost of snow)—Or flourished and come up in jewelweed, Weak foliage that is blown upon and bent, Even against the way its waters went. Its bed is left a faded paper sheet Of dead leaves stuck together by the heat—A brook to none but who remember long. This as it will be seen is other far Than with brooks taken otherwhere in song. We love the things we love for what they are.

#### THE OVEN BIRD

There is a singer everyone has heard, Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird, Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again. He says that leaves are old and that for flowers Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.

He says the early petal-fall is past,
When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers
On sunny days a moment overcast;
And comes that other fall we name the fall.
He says the highway dust is over all.
The bird would cease and be as other birds
But that he knows in singing not to sing.
The question that he frames in all but words
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

#### BOND AND FREE

Love has earth to which she clings With hills and circling arms about— Wall within wall to shut fear out. But Thought has need of no such things, For Thought has a pair of dauntless wings.

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On snow and sand and turf, I see Where Love has left a printed trace With straining in the world's embrace. And such is Love and glad to be. But Thought has shaken his ankles free.

Thought cleaves the interstellar gloom And sits in Sirius' disc all night, Till day makes him retrace his flight, With smell of burning on every plume, Back past the sun to an earthly room.

His gains in heaven are what they are. Yet some say Love by being thrall And simply staying possesses all

#### PEA BRUSH

I walked down alone Sunday after church To the place where John has been cutting trees, To see for myself about the birch He said I could have to bush my peas.	
The sun in the new-cut narrow gap Was hot enough for the first of May, And stifling hot with the odor of sap From stumps still bleeding their life away.	5
The frogs that were peeping a thousand shrill Wherever the ground was low and wet, The minute they heard my step went still To watch me and see what I came to get.	10
Birch boughs enough piled everywhere!— All fresh and sound from the recent ax. Time someone came with cart and pair And got them off the wild flowers' backs.	15
They might be good for garden things To curl a little finger round, The same as you seize cat's-cradle strings, And lift themselves up off the ground.	20
Small good to anything growing wild, They were crooking many a trillium That had budded before the boughs were piled And since it was coming up had to come.	

## PUTTING IN THE SEED

You come to fetch me from my work tonight When supper's on the table, and we'll see

If I can leave off burying the white Soft petals fallen from the apple tree (Soft petals, yes, but not so barren quite, Mingled with these, smooth bean and wrinkled pea). And go along with you ere you lose sight Of what you came for and become like me, Slave to a springtime passion for the earth. How Love burns through the Putting in the Seed 10 On through the watching for that early birth When, just as the soil tarnishes with weed, The sturdy seedling with arched body comes Shouldering its way and shedding the earth crumbs.

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#### A TIME TO TALK

When a friend calls to me from the road And slows his horse to a meaning walk, I don't stand still and look around On all the hills I haven't hoed, And shout from where I am, "What is it?" No, not as there is a time to talk. I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground, Blade-end up and five feet tall, And plod: I go up to the stone wall For a friendly visit.

#### THE COW IN APPLE TIME

Something inspires the only cow of late To make no more of a wall than an open gate, And think no more of wall-builders than fools. Her face is flecked with pomace and she drools A cider syrup. Having tasted fruit,

She scorns a pasture withering to the root.
She runs from tree to tree where lie and sweeten
The windfalls spiked with stubble and worm-eaten.
She leaves them bitten when she has to fly.
She bellows on a knoll against the sky.
Her udder shrivels and the milk goes dry.

#### AN ENCOUNTER

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Once on the kind of day called "weather breeder," When the heat slowly hazes and the sun By its own power seems to be undone, I was half boring through, half climbing through A swamp of cedar. Choked with oil of cedar And scurf of plants, and weary and overheated, And sorry I ever left the road I knew, I paused and rested on a sort of hook That had me by the coat as good as seated, And since there was no other way to look, Looked up toward heaven, and there against the blue, Stood over me a resurrected tree. A tree that had been down and raised again— A barkless specter. He had halted too, As if for fear of treading upon me. I saw the strange position of his hands— Up at his shoulders, dragging yellow strands Of wire with something in it from men to men. "You here?" I said. "Where aren't you nowadays? And what's the news you carry—if you know? And tell me where you're off for—Montreal? Me? I'm not off for anywhere at all. Sometimes I wander out of beaten ways Half looking for the orchid Calypso."

#### **RANGE-FINDING**

The battle rent a cobweb diamond-strung
And cut a flower beside a groundbird's nest
Before it stained a single human breast.
The stricken flower bent double and so hung.
And still the bird revisited her young.
A butterfly its fall had dispossessed,
A moment sought in air his flower of rest,
Then lightly stooped to it and fluttering clung.
On the bare upland pasture there had spread
O'ernight 'twixt mullein stalks a wheel of thread
And straining cables wet with silver dew.
A sudden passing bullet shook it dry.
The indwelling spider ran to greet the fly,
But finding nothing, sullenly withdrew.

#### THE HILL WIFE

#### I. LONELINESS

#### Her Word

One ought not to have to care
So much as you and I
Care when the birds come round the house
To seem to say good-by;

Or care so much when they come back
With whatever it is they sing;
The truth being we are as much
Too glad for the one thing

As we are too sad for the other here— With birds that fill their breasts

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But with each other and themselves And their built or driven nests.

#### II. HOUSE FEAR

Always—I tell you this they learned—Always at night when they returned To the lonely house from far away, To lamps unlighted and fire gone gray, They learned to rattle the lock and key To give whatever might chance to be, Warning and time to be off in flight: And preferring the out- to the indoor night, They learned to leave the house door wide Until they had lit the lamp inside.

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#### III. THE SMILE

#### Her Word

I didn't like the way he went away.
That smile! It never came of being gay.
Still he smiled—did you see him?—I was sure!
Perhaps because we gave him only bread
And the wretch knew from that that we were poor.
Perhaps because he let us give instead
Of seizing from us as he might have seized.
Perhaps he mocked at us for being wed,
Or being very young (and he was pleased
To have a vision of us old and dead).
I wonder how far down the road he's got.
He's watching from the woods as like as not.

#### IV. THE OFT-REPEATED DREAM

She had no saying dark enough
For the dark pine that kept
Forever trying the window latch
Of the room where they slept.

The tireless but ineffectual hands
That with every futile pass
Made the great tree seem as a little bird
Before the mystery of glass!

It never had been inside the room,
And only one of the two
Was afraid in an oft-repeated dream
Of what the tree might do.

#### V. THE IMPULSE

It was too lonely for her there,
And too wild,
And since there were but two of them,
And no child,

And work was little in the house,
She was free,
And followed where he furrowed field,
Or felled tree.

She rested on a log and tossed The fresh chips, With a song only to herself On her lips.

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And once she went to break a bough Of black alder. She strayed so far she scarcely heard When he called her—	15
And didn't answer—didn't speak— Or return. She stood, and then she ran and hid In the fern.	20
He never found her, though he looked Everywhere, And he asked at her mother's house Was she there.	
Sudden and swift and light as that The ties gave, And he learned of finalities Besides the grave.	25
THE BONFIRE	
"Oh, let's go up the hill and scare ourselves, As reckless as the best of them tonight, By setting fire to all the brush we piled With pitchy hands to wait for rain or snow. Oh, let's not wait for rain to make it safe. The pile is ours: we dragged it bough on bough Down dark converging paths between the pines. Let's not care what we do with it tonight.	5
Divide it? No! But burn it as one pile The way we piled it. And let's be the talk Of people brought to windows by a light Thrown from somewhere against their wallpaper.	10

Rouse them all, both the free and not so free With saying what they'd like to do to us For what they'd better wait till we have done. 15 Let's all but bring to life this old volcano, If that is what the mountain ever was— And scare ourselves. Let wild fire loose we will——" "And scare you too?" the children said together. "Why wouldn't it scare me to have a fire 20 Begin in smudge with ropy smoke, and know That still, if I repent, I may recall it, But in a moment not: a little spurt Of burning fatness, and then nothing but The fire itself can put it out, and that 25 By burning out, and before it burns out It will have roared first and mixed sparks with stars, And sweeping round it with a flaming sword, Made the dim trees stand back in wider circle— Done so much and I know not how much more 30 I mean it shall not do if I can bind it. Well if it doesn't with its draft bring on A wind to blow in earnest from some quarter, As once it did with me upon an April. The breezes were so spent with winter blowing 35 They seemed to fail the bluebirds under them Short of the perch their languid flight was toward; And my flame made a pinnacle to heaven As I walked once around it in possession. But the wind out-of-doors—you know the saying. 40 There came a gust. (You used to think the trees Made wind by fanning, since you never knew It blow but that you saw the trees in motion.) Something or someone watching made that gust.

It put the flame tip-down and dabbed the grass Of over-winter with the least tip-touch Your tongue gives salt or sugar in your hand. The place it reached to blackened instantly. The black was almost all there was by daylight, That and the merest curl of cigarette smoke— And a flame slender as the hepaticas, Bloodroot, and violets so soon to be now. But the black spread like black death on the ground, And I think the sky darkened with a cloud	50
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The state of the s	
Like winter and evening coming on together.	55
There were enough things to be thought of then.	
Where the field stretches toward the north	
And setting sun to Hyla brook, I gave it	
To flames without twice thinking, where it verges	
Upon the read to flames too the 1 · C	60
They might find fuel there, in withered brake,	
Grass its full length, old silver goldenrod.	
And alder and grape vine entanglement,	
To leap the dusty deadline. For my own	
I took what front there was basile I lead.	65
And thrust hands in and held my face away.	
Fight such a fire by rubbing not by beating.	
A board is the best weapon if you have it.	
I had my coat. And oh, I knew, I knew,	
And said out loud. I couldn't hide about	70
And heat so close in; but the thought of all	U
The woods and town on fire by me, and all	
The town turned out to fight for me—that held me.	
trusted the brook barrier, but feared	
the road would fail and on that aids the fire	<b>'</b> 5
Died not without a noise of crackling wood—	J
Of something more than tinder-grass and weed—	

That brought me to my feet to hold it back By leaning back myself, as if the reins	
Were round my neck and I was at the plow.	80
I won! But I'm sure no one ever spread	
Another color over a tenth the space	
That I spread coal-black over in the time	
It took me. Neighbors coming home from town	0.5
Couldn't believe that so much black had come there	85
While they had backs turned, that it hadn't been there	
When they had passed an hour or so before	
Going the other way and they not seen it.	
They looked about for someone to have done it.	
But there was no one. I was somewhere wondering	90
Where all my weariness had gone and why	
I walked so light on air in heavy shoes	
In spite of a scorched Fourth-of-July feeling.	
Why wouldn't I be scared remembering that?"	
"If it scares you, what will it do to us?"	95
"Scare you. But if you shrink from being scared,	
What would you say to war if it should come?	
That's what for reasons I should like to know—	
If you can comfort me by any answer."	
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"Oh, but war's not for children—it's for men."	100
"Now we are digging almost down to China.	
My dears, my dears, you thought that—we all thought	it.
So your mistake was ours. Haven't you heard, though,	
About the ships where war has found them out	
At sea, about the towns where war has come	105
Through opening clouds at night with droning speed	
Further o'erhead than all but stars and angels—	
And children in the ships and in the towns?	

Haven't you heard what we have lived to learn? Nothing so new—something we had forgotten: War is for everyone, for children too. I wasn't going to tell you and I mustn't. The best way is to come uphill with me And have our fire and laugh and be afraid."	110
A GIRL'S GARDEN	
A neighbor of mine in the village Likes to tell how one spring When she was a girl on the farm, she did A childlike thing.	
One day she asked her father To give her a garden plot To plant and tend and reap herself, And he said, "Why not?"	5
In casting about for a corner He thought of an idle bit Of walled-off ground where a shop had stood, And he said, "Just it."	10
And he said, "That ought to make you An ideal one-girl farm, And give you a chance to put some strength On your slim-jim arm."	15
It was not enough of a garden, Her father said, to plow; So she had to work it all by hand, But she don't mind now.	20

She wheeled the dung in the wheelbarrow Along a stretch of road; But she always ran away and left Her not-nice load,	
And hid from anyone passing.  And then she begged the seed.  She says she thinks she planted one Of all things but weed.	25
A hill each of potatoes, Radishes, lettuce, peas, Tomatoes, beets, beans, pumpkins, corn, And even fruit trees.	30
And yes, she has long mistrusted That a cider-apple tree In bearing there today is hers, Or at least may be.	35
Her crop was a miscellany When all was said and done, A little bit of everything, A great deal of none.	40
Now when she sees in the village  How village things go,  Just when it seems to come in right,  She says, "I know!	
"It's as when I was a farmer"  Oh, never by way of advice!  And she never sins by telling the tale  To the same person twice.	45

#### LOCKED OUT

#### As told to a child

When we locked up the house at night,
We always locked the flowers outside
And cut them off from window light.
The time I dreamed the door was tried
And brushed with buttons upon sleeves,
The flowers were out there with the thieves.
Yet nobody molested them!
We did find one nasturtium
Upon the steps with bitten stem.
I may have been to blame for that:
I always thought it must have been
Some flower I played with as I sat
At dusk to watch the moon down early.

### THE LAST WORD OF A BLUEBIRD

As told to a child

As I went out a Crow
In a low voice said, "Oh,
I was looking for you.
How do you do?
I just came to tell you
To tell Lesley (will you?)
That her little Bluebird
Wanted me to bring word
That the north wind last night
That made the stars bright
And made ice on the trough
Almost made him cough
His tail feathers off.

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He just had to fly!
But he sent her Good-by,
And said to be good,
And wear her red hood,
And look for skunk tracks
In the snow with an ax—
And do everything!
And perhaps in the spring
He would come back and sing."

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### "OUT, OUT—"

The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood, Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it. And from there those that lifted eyes could count Five mountain ranges one behind the other Under the sunset far into Vermont. And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled, As it ran light, or had to bear a load. And nothing happened: day was all but done. Call it a day, I wish they might have said To please the boy by giving him the half hour That a boy counts so much when saved from work. His sister stood beside them in her apron To tell them "Supper." At the word, the saw, As if to prove saws knew what supper meant, Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap— He must have given the hand. However it was, Neither refused the meeting. But the hand! The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh, As he swung toward them holding up the hand,

Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—
Since he was old enough to know, big boy
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—
He saw all spoiled. "Don't let him cut my hand off—
The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!"
So. But the hand was gone already.
The doctor put him in the dark of ether.
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.
And then—the watcher at his pulse took fright.
No one believed. They listened at his heart.
Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it.
No more to build on there. And they, since they
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

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### BROWN'S DESCENT

Brown lived at such a lofty farm
That everyone for miles could see
His lantern when he did his chores
In winter after half-past three.

And many must have seen him make
His wild descent from there one night,
'Cross lots, 'cross walls, 'cross everything,
Describing rings of lantern-light.

Between the house and barn the gale
Got him by something he had on
And blew him out on the icy crust
That cased the world, and he was gone!

Walls were all buried, trees were few: He saw no stay unless he stove

A hole in somewhere with his heel. But though repeatedly he strove	15
And stamped and said things to himself, And sometimes something seemed to yield, He gained no foothold, but pursued His journey down from field to field.	20
Sometimes he came with arms outspread Like wings, revolving in the scene Upon his longer axis, and With no small dignity of mien.	
Faster or slower as he chanced, Sitting or standing as he chose, According as he feared to risk His neck, or thought to spare his clothes.	25
He never let the lantern drop.  And some exclaimed who saw afar The figures he described with it, "I wonder what those signals are	30
"Brown makes at such an hour of night! He's celebrating something strange. I wonder if he's sold his farm, Or been made Master of the Grange."	35
He reeled, he lurched, he bobbed, he checked; He fell and made the lantern rattle (But saved the light from going out). So halfway down he fought the battle,	40
Incredulous of his own bad luck.  And then becoming reconciled	

To everything, he gave it up  And came down like a coasting child.	
"Well—I—be—" that was all he said, As standing in the river road He looked back up the slippery slope (Two miles it was) to his abode.	45
Sometimes as an authority On motorcars, I'm asked if I Should say our stock was petered out, And this is my sincere reply:	50
Yankees are what they always were.  Don't think Brown ever gave up hope Of getting home again because He couldn't climb that slippery slope;	55
Or even thought of standing there Until the January thaw Should take the polish off the crust. He bowed with grace to natural law,	60
And then went round it on his feet, After the manner of our stock; Not much concerned for those to whom, At that particular time o'clock,	
It must have looked as if the course He steered was really straight away From that which he was headed for— Not much concerned for them, I say;	65
No more so than became a man—  And politician at odd seasons.	70

I've kept Brown standing in the cold While I invested him with reasons;

But now he snapped his eyes three times; Then shook his lantern, saying, "Ile's 'Bout out!" and took the long way home By road, a matter of several miles.

THE GUM-GATHERER

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There overtook me and drew me in To his downhill, early-morning stride, And set me five miles on my road Better than if he had had me ride, A man with a swinging bag for load And half the bag wound round his hand. We talked like barking above the din Of water we walked along beside. And for my telling him where I'd been And where I lived in mountain land To be coming home the way I was, He told me a little about himself. He came from higher up in the pass Where the grist of the new-beginning brooks Is blocks split off the mountain mass-And hopeless grist enough it looks Ever to grind to soil for grass. (The way it is will do for moss.) There he had built his stolen shack. It had to be a stolen shack Because of the fears of fire and loss That trouble the sleep of lumber folk: Visions of half the world burned black

And the sun shrunken yellow in smoke.

We know who when they come to town

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Bring berries under the wagon seat,
Or a basket of eggs between their feet;
What this man brought in a cotton sack
Was gum, the gum of the mountain spruce.
He showed me lumps of the scented stuff

Like uncut jewels, dull and rough.

It comes to market golden brown;
But turns to pink between the teeth.

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I told him this is a pleasant life,
To set your breast to the bark of trees
That all your days are dim beneath,
And reaching up with a little knife,
To loose the resin and take it down
And bring it to market when you please.

### THE LINE-GANG

Here come the line-gang pioneering by.
They throw a forest down less cut than broken.
They plant dead trees for living, and the dead
They string together with a living thread.
They string an instrument against the sky
Wherein words whether beaten out or spoken
Will run as hushed as when they were a thought.
But in no hush they string it: they go past
With shouts afar to pull the cable taut,
To hold it hard until they make it fast,
To ease away—they have it. With a laugh,
An oath of towns that set the wild at naught,
They bring the telephone and telegraph.

### THE VANISHING RED

He is said to have been the last Red Man In Acton. And the Miller is said to have laughed— If you like to call such a sound a laugh. But he gave no one else a laugher's license. For he turned suddenly grave as if to say, "Whose business—if I take it on myself, Whose business—but why talk round the barn?— When it's just that I hold with getting a thing done with.	5
You can't get back and see it as he saw it.  It's too long a story to go into now.  You'd have to have been there and lived it.  Then you wouldn't have looked on it as just a matter  Of who began it between the two races.	10
Some guttural exclamation of surprise The Red Man gave in poking about the mill, Over the great big thumping, shuffling millstone, Disgusted the Miller physically as coming From one who had no right to be heard from.	15
"Come, John," he said, "you want to see the wheel pit?"  He took him down below a cramping rafter, And showed him, through a manhole in the floor, The water in desperate straits like frantic fish, Salmon and sturgeon, lashing with their tails.	20
Then he shut down the trap door with a ring in it That jangled even above the general noise, And came upstairs alone—and gave that laugh, And said something to a man with a meal sack That the man with the meal sack didn't catch—then. Oh, yes, he showed John the wheel pit all right.	2

### snow

Of wind that caught against the house a moment, Gulped snow, and then blew free again—the Coles, Dressed, but disheveled from some hours of sleep; Meserve, belittled in the great skin coat he wore.	5
Meserve was first to speak. He pointed backward Over his shoulder with his pipestem, saying, "You can just see it glancing off the roof Making a great scroll upward toward the sky,	
Long enough for recording all our names on.— I think I'll just call up my wife and tell her I'm here—so far—and starting on again. I'll call her softly so that if she's wise	10
And gone to sleep, she needn't wake to answer." Three times he barely stirred the bell, then listened. "Why, Lett, still up? Lett, I'm at Cole's. I'm late. I called you up to say Good-night from here Before I went to say Good-morning there.— I thought I would.—I know, but, Lett—I know—	15
I could, but what's the sense? The rest won't be So bad.—Give me an hour for it.— Ho, ho, Three hours to here! But that was all uphill; The rest is down.—Why no, no, not a wallow: They kept their heads and took their time to it	20
Like darlings, both of them. They're in the barn.— My dear, I'm coming just the same. I didn't Call you to ask you to invite me home.—" He lingered for some word she wouldn't say, Said it at last himself, "Good-night," and then,	25
Getting no answer, closed the telephone.	30

The three stood in the lamplight round the table	
With lowered eyes a moment till he said,	
"I'll just see how the horses are."	
"Yes, do,"	
Both the Coles said together. Mrs. Cole	
Added: "You can judge better after seeing.—	35
I want you here with me, Fred.—Leave him here,	3,
Brother Meserve. You know to find your way	
Out through the shed."	
"I guess I know my way.	
, ,	
I guess I know where I can find my name Carved in the shed to tell me who I am	40
_	40
If it don't tell me where I am. I used	
To play——"	
"You tend your horses and come back.—	
Fred Cole, you're going to let him!"	
"Well, aren't you?	
How can you help yourself?"	
"I called him Brother.	
Why did I call him that?"	
"It's right enough.	45
That's all you ever heard him called round here.	
He seems to have lost off his Christian name."	
"Christian enough I should call that myself.	
He took no notice, did he? Well, at least	50
I didn't use it out of love of him,	)(
The dear knows. I detest the thought of him—	
With his ten children under ten years old.	
I hate his wretched little Racker Sect,	
All's ever I heard of it, which isn't much.	55
But that's not saying—look, Fred Cole, it's twelve,	٠,

Isn't it, now? He's been here half an hour. He says he left the village store at nine: Three hours to do four miles—a mile an hour Or not much better. Why, it doesn't seem As if a man could move that slow and move. Try to think what he did with all that time.

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And three miles more to go!"

"Don't let him go.

Stick to him, Helen. Make him answer you. That sort of man talks straight-on all his life From the last thing he said himself, stone deaf To anything anyone else may say.

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I should have thought, though, you could make him hear you."

"What is he doing out a night like this? Why can't he stay at home?"

"He had to preach."

"It's no night to be out."

"He may be small,

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He may be good, but one thing's sure, he's tough."

"And strong of stale tobacco."

"He'll pull through."

"You only say so. Not another house Or shelter to put into from this place To theirs. I'm going to call his wife again."

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"Wait and he may. Let's see what he will do. Let's see if he will think of her again. But then, I doubt he's thinking of himself. He doesn't look on it as anything."

"He shan't go—there!"

"It is a night, my dear."	80
"One thing: he didn't drag God into it."	
"He don't consider it a case for God."	
"You think so, do you? You don't know the kind. He's getting up a miracle this minute. Privately—to himself, right now, he's thinking He'll make a case of it if he succeeds, But keep still if he fails."	85
"Keep still all over.	
He'll be dead—dead and buried."  "Such a trouble!	
Not but I've every reason not to care	
What happens to him if it only takes Some of the sanctimonious conceit Out of one of those pious scalawags."	90
"Nonsense to that! You want to see him safe."	
"You like the runt."	
"Don't you a little?" "Well,	
I don't like what he's doing, which is what You like, and like him for."  "Oh, yes you do.	95
You like your fun as well as anyone;	
Only you women have to put these airs on To impress men. You've got us so ashamed Of being men we can't look at a good fight Between two boys and not feel bound to stop it. Let the man freeze an ear or two, I say.—	100
He's here. I leave him all to you. Go in	

Sit down, sit down. How did you find the horses?"	105
"Fine, fine."	
"And ready for some more? My wife here Says it won't do. You've got to give it up."	
"Won't you to please me? Please! If I say Please? Mr. Meserve, I'll leave it to <i>your</i> wife. What <i>did</i> your wife say on the telephone?"	110
Meserve seemed to heed nothing but the lamp Or something not far from it on the table. By straightening out and lifting a forefinger,	
He pointed with his hand from where it lay	
Like a white crumpled spider on his knee:	115
"That leaf there in your open book! It moved	
Just then, I thought. It's stood erect like that, There on the table, ever since I came,	
Trying to turn itself backward or forward,	
I've had my eye on it to make out which:	120
If forward, then it's with a friend's impatience—	
You see I know—to get you on to things	
It wants to see how you will take; if backward,	
It's from regret for something you have passed	
And failed to see the good of. Never mind,	125
Things must expect to come in front of us	
A many times—I don't say just how many—	
That varies with the things—before we see them.	
One of the lies would make it out that nothing	
Ever presents itself before us twice.	130
Where would we be at last if that were so?	
Our very life depends on everything's	
Recurring till we answer from within	

The thousandth time may prove the charm.—That leaf!	
It can't turn either way. It needs the wind's help.	135
But the wind didn't move it if it moved.	
It moved itself. The wind's at naught in here.	
It couldn't stir so sensitively poised	
A thing as that. It couldn't reach the lamp	
To get a puff of black smoke from the flame,	140
Or blow a rumple in the collie's coat.	
You make a little foursquare block of air,	
Quiet and light and warm, in spite of all	
The illimitable dark and cold and storm,	
And by so doing give these three, lamp, dog,	145
And book-leaf, that keep near you, their repose;	
Though for all anyone can tell, repose	
May be the thing you haven't, yet you give it.	
So false it is that what we haven't we can't give;	
So false, that what we always say is true.	150
I'll have to turn the leaf if no one else will.	
It won't lie down. Then let it stand. Who cares?"	
"I shouldn't want to hurry you, Meserve,	
But if you're going—say you'll stay, you know.	
But let me raise this curtain on a scene,	155
And show you how it's piling up against you.	
You see the snow-white through the white of frost?	
Ask Helen how far up the sash it's climbed	
Since last we read the gauge."	
"It looks as if	
Some pallid thing had squashed its features flat	160
And its eyes shut with overeagerness	
To see what people found so interesting	
In one another, and had gone to sleep	
Of its own stupid lack of understanding,	
Ca 200 C 112 C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C	

Short off, and died against the windowpane."	102
"Brother Meserve, take care, you'll scare yourself More than you will us with such nightmare talk. It's you it matters to, because it's you Who have to go out into it alone."	170
"Let him talk, Helen, and perhaps he'll stay."	
"Before you drop the curtain—I'm reminded: You recollect the boy who came out here To breathe the air one winter—had a room	
Down at the Averys'? Well, one sunny morning After a downy storm, he passed our place And found me banking up the house with snow.	175
And I was burrowing in deep for warmth, Piling it well above the windowsills.	
The snow against the window caught his eye. 'Hey, that's a pretty thought'—those were his words— 'So you can think it's six feet deep outside, While you sit warm and read up balanced rations.	180
You can't get too much winter in the winter.' Those were his words. And he went home and all But banked the daylight out of Avery's windows. Now you and I would go to no such length.	185
At the same time you can't deny it makes It not a mite worse, sitting here, we three,	
Playing our fancy, to have the snow-line run So high across the pane outside. There where There is a sort of tunnel in the frost— More like a tunnel than a hole—way down	190
At the far end of it you see a stir	
And quiver like the frayed edge of the drift	195

Blown in the wind. I *like* that—I like *that*. Well, now I leave you, people."

"Come, Meserve,

We thought you were deciding not to go— The ways you found to say the praise of comfort And being where you are. You want to stay."

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"I'll own it's cold for such a fall of snow.

This house is frozen brittle, all except
This room you sit in. If you think the wind
Sounds further off, it's not because it's dying;
You're further under in the snow—that's all—
And feel it less. Hear the soft bombs of dust
It bursts against us at the chimney mouth,
And at the eaves. I like it from inside
More than I shall out in it. But the horses
Are rested and it's time to say Good-night,
And let you get to bed again. Good-night,
Source I had to break in on your sleep."

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And let you get to bed again. Good-night,
Sorry I had to break in on your sleep."

"Lucky for you you did. Lucky for you
You had us for a halfway station

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You had us for a halfway station
To stop at. If you were the kind of man
Paid heed to women, you'd take my advice
And for your family's sake stay where you are.
But what good is my saying it over and over?
You've done more than you had a right to think
You could do—now. You know the risk you take
In going on."

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"Our snowstorms as a rule Aren't looked on as man-killers, and although I'd rather be the beast that sleeps the sleep Under it all, his door sealed up and lost,

Than the man fighting it to keep above it,	225
Yet think of the small birds at roost and not	
In nests. Shall I be counted less than they are?	
Their bulk in water would be frozen rock	
In no time out tonight. And yet tomorrow	
They will come budding boughs from tree to tree,	230
Flirting their wings and saying Chickadee,	
As if not knowing what you meant by the word storm."	
"But why, when no one wants you to, go on?	
Your wife—she doesn't want you to. We don't,	
And you yourself don't want to. Who else is there?"	235
"Save us from being cornered by a woman.	
Well, there's—" She told Fred afterward that in	
The pause right there, she thought the dreaded word	
Was coming, "God." But no, he only said,	
"Well, there's—the storm. That says I must go on.	240
That wants me as a war might if it came.	
Ask any man."	
He threw her that as something	
To last her till he got outside the door.	
He had Cole with him to the barn to see him off.	
When Cole returned he found his wife still standing	245
Beside the table, near the open book,	
Not reading it.	
"Well, what kind of a man	
Do you call that?" she said.	
"He had the gift	
Of words, or is it tongues I ought to say?"	
"Was ever such a man for seeing likeness?"	250
"Or disregarding people's civil questions—	

What? We've found out in one hour more about him Than we had seeing him pass by in the road A thousand times. If that's the way he preaches! You didn't think you'd keep him after all. Oh, I'm not blaming you. He didn't leave you Much say in the matter, and I'm just as glad We're not in for a night of him. No sleep If he had stayed. The least thing set him going. It's quiet as an empty church without him."	255 260
"But how much better off are we as it is? We'll have to sit here till we know he's safe."	
"Yes, I suppose you'll want to, but I shouldn't. He knows what he can do, or he wouldn't try. Get into bed I say, and get some rest. He won't come back, and if he telephones, It won't be for an hour or two."	265
. "Well then—	
We can't be any help by sitting here And living his fight through with him, I suppose."	
* * *	
Cole had been telephoning in the dark. Mrs. Cole's voice came from an inner room: "Did she call you or you call her?"	270
"She me. You'd better dress: you won't go back to bed. We must have been asleep: it's three and after."	
"Had she been ringing long? I'll get my wrapper. I want to speak to her."	275
"All she said was, He hadn't come and had he really started."	

"She knew he had, poor thing, two hours ago." "He had the shovel. He'll have made a fight." "Why did I ever let him leave this house!" 280 "Don't begin that. You did the best you could To keep him—though perhaps you didn't quite Conceal a wish to see him show the spunk To disobey you. Much his wife'll thank you." "Fred, after all I said! You shan't make out 285 That it was any way but what it was. Did she let on by any word she said She didn't thank me?" "When I told her 'Gone,' 'Well then,' she said, and 'Well then'—like a threat. And then her voice came scraping slow: 'Oh, you, 290 Why did you let him go?" "Asked why we let him? You let me there. I'll ask her why she let him. She didn't dare to speak when he was here. Their number's—twenty-one?—The thing won't work. Someone's receiver's down. The handle stumbles. 295 The stubborn thing, the way it jars your arm!— It's theirs. She's dropped it from her hand and gone." "Try speaking. Say 'Hello!'" "Hello, Hello," "What do you hear?" "I hear an empty room— You know-it sounds that way. And yes, I hear-300 I think I hear a clock—and windows rattling. No step, though. If she's there she's sitting down."

"Shout, she may hear you." "Shouting is no good." "Keep speaking, then." "Hello, Hello, Hello,— You don't suppose?—she wouldn't go outdoors?" 305 "I'm half afraid that's just what she might do." "And leave the children?" "Wait and call again. You can't hear whether she has left the door Wide open and the wind's blown out the lamp And the fire's died and the room's dark and cold?" 310 "One of two things, either she's gone to bed Or gone outdoors." "In which case both are lost. Do you know what she's like? Have you ever met her? It's strange she doesn't want to speak to us." "Fred, see if you can hear what I hear. Come." 315 "A clock maybe." "Don't you hear something else?" "Not talking." "No." "Why, yes, I hear-what is it?" "What do you say it is?" "A baby's crying! Frantic it sounds, though muffled and far off. Its mother wouldn't let it cry like that, 320 Not if she's there."

### "What do you make of it?"

"There's only one thing possible to make, That is, assuming—that she has gone out. Of course she hasn't, though." They both sat down Helpless. "There's nothing we can do till morning."	325
"Fred, I shan't let you think of going out."	
"Hold on." The double bell began to chirp. They started up. Fred took the telephone. "Hello, Meserve. You're there, then!—and your wife? Good! Why I asked—she didn't seem to answer.— He says she went to let him in the barn.— We're glad. Oh, say no more about it, man. Drop in and see us when you're passing."	330
"Well,	
She has him, then, though what she wants him for I don't see."	
"Possibly not for herself.	335
Maybe she only wants him for the children."	
"The whole to-do seems to have been for nothing. What spoiled our night was to him just his fun. What did he come in for?—to talk and visit? Thought he'd just call to tell us it was snowing. If he thinks he is going to make our house A halfway coffee house 'twixt town and nowhere——"	340
"I thought you'd feel you'd been too much concerned."	
"You think you haven't been concerned yourself."	
"If you mean he was inconsiderate To rout us out to think for him at midnight And then take our advice no more than nothing,	345

Why, I agree with you. But let's forgive him. We've had a share in one night of his life. What'll you bet he ever calls again?"

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#### THE SOUND OF TREES

I wonder about the trees. Why do we wish to bear Forever the noise of these More than another noise So close to our dwelling place? We suffer them by the day Till we lose all measure of pace. And fixity in our joys, And acquire a listening air. They are that that talks of going But never gets away; And that talks no less for knowing, As it grows wiser and older, That now it means to stay. My feet tug at the floor And my head sways to my shoulder Sometimes when I watch trees sway, From the window or the door. I shall set forth for somewhere, I shall make the reckless choice Some day when they are in voice And tossing so as to scare The white clouds over them on. I shall have less to say, But I shall be gone.

# New Hampshire

: 1923 :

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### NEW HAMPSHIRE

I met a lady from the South who said (You won't believe she said it, but she said it): "None of my family ever worked, or had A thing to sell." I don't suppose the work Much matters. You may work for all of me. I've seen the time I've had to work myself. The having anything to sell is what Is the disgrace in man or state or nation.	5
I met a traveler from Arkansas Who boasted of his state as beautiful For diamonds and apples. "Diamonds And apples in commercial quantities?" I asked him, on my guard. "Oh, yes," he answered, Off his. The time was evening in the Pullman. "I see the porter's made your bed," I told him.	10
I met a Californian who would Talk California—a state so blessed, He said, in climate, none had ever died there A natural death, and Vigilance Committees Had had to organize to stock the graveyards And vindicate the state's humanity. "Just the way Stefansson runs on," I murmured, "About the British Arctic. That's what comes Of being in the market with a climate."	20
I met a poet from another state, A zealot full of fluid inspiration, Who in the name of fluid inspiration,	25

But in the best style of bad salesmanship, Angrily tried to make me write a protest (In verse I think) against the Volstead Act. He didn't even offer me a drink Until I asked for one to steady *him*. This is called having an idea to sell.

It never could have happened in New Hampshire.

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The only person really soiled with trade I ever stumbled on in old New Hampshire Was someone who had just come back ashamed From selling things in California. He'd built a noble mansard roof with balls On turrets, like Constantinople, deep In woods some ten miles from a railroad station, As if to put forever out of mind The hope of being, as we say, received. I found him standing at the close of day Inside the threshold of his open barn, Like a lone actor on a gloomy stage— And recognized him, through the iron gray In which his face was muffled to the eyes. As an old boyhood friend, and once indeed A drover with me on the road to Brighton. His farm was "grounds," and not a farm at all; His house among the local sheds and shanties Rose like a factor's at a trading station. And he was rich, and I was still a rascal. I couldn't keep from asking impolitely, Where had he been and what had he been doing? How did he get so? (Rich was understood.) In dealing in "old rags" in San Francisco. Oh, it was terrible as well could be.

We both of us turned over in our graves.	60
Just specimens is all New Hampshire has, One each of everything as in a showcase, Which naturally she doesn't care to sell.	
She had one President. (Pronounce him Purse, And make the most of it for better or worse. He's your one chance to score against the state.) She had one Daniel Webster. He was all The Daniel Webster ever was or shall be. She had the Dartmouth needed to produce him.	65
I call her old. She has one family Whose claim is good to being settled here Before the era of colonization, And before that of exploration even. John Smith remarked them as he coasted by,	70
Dangling their legs and fishing off a wharf At the Isles of Shoals, and satisfied himself They weren't Red Indians but veritable Pre-primitives of the white race, dawn people,	75
Like those who furnished Adam's sons with wives; However uninnocent they may have been In being there so early in our history. They'd been there then a hundred years or more.	80
Pity he didn't ask what they were up to At that date with a wharf already built, And take their name. They've since told me their name— Today an honored one in Nottingham. As for what they were up to more than fishing— Suppose they weren't behaving Puritanly, The hour had not yet struck for being good,	_
Mankind had not yet gone on the Sabbatical.	90

It became an explorer of the deep Not to explore too deep in others' business.

Did you but know of him, New Hampshire has One real reformer who would change the world So it would be accepted by two classes, Artists the minute they set up as artists, Before, that is, they are themselves accepted, And boys the minute they get out of college. I can't help thinking those are tests to go by.

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And she has one I don't know what to call him, Who comes from Philadelphia every year With a great flock of chickens of rare breeds He wants to give the educational Advantages of growing almost wild Under the watchful eye of hawk and eagle—Dorkings because they're spoken of by Chaucer, Sussex because they're spoken of by Herrick.

She has a touch of gold. New Hampshire gold—You may have heard of it. I had a farm
Offered me not long since up Berlin way
With a mine on it that was worked for gold;
But not gold in commercial quantities,
Just enough gold to make the engagement rings
And marriage rings of those who owned the farm.
What gold more innocent could one have asked for?
One of my children ranging after rocks
Lately brought home from Andover or Canaan
A specimen of beryl with a trace
Of radium. I know with radium
The trace would have to be the merest trace
To be below the threshold of commercial;

But trust New Hampshire not to have enough Of radium or anything to sell.

A specimen of everything, I said.	
She has one witch—old style. She lives in Colebrook.	125
(The only other witch I ever met	
Was lately at a cut-glass dinner in Boston.	
There were four candles and four people present.	
The witch was young, and beautiful (new style),	
And open-minded. She was free to question	130
Her gift for reading letters locked in boxes.	
Why was it so much greater when the boxes	
Were metal than it was when they were wooden?	
It made the world seem so mysterious.	
The S'ciety for Psychical Research	135
Was cognizant. Her husband was worth millions.	
I think he owned some shares in Harvard College.)	
New Hampshire used to have at Salem	
A company we called the White Corpuscles,	
Whose duty was at any hour of night	140
To rush in sheets and fool's caps where they smelled	
A thing the least bit doubtfully perscented	
And give someone the Skipper Ireson's Ride.	
One each of everything as in a showcase.	
More than enough land for a specimen	145
You'll say she has, but there there enters in	
Something else to protect her from herself.	
There quality makes up for quantity.	
Not even New Hampshire farms are much for sale.	
The farm I made my home on in the mountains	150
I had to take by force rather than buy	.,

I caught the owner outdoors by himself Raking up after winter, and I said, "I'm going to put you off this farm: I want it." "Where are you going to put me? In the road?" "I'm going to put you on the farm next to it." "Why won't the farm next to it do for you?" "I like this better." It was really better.	155
Apples? New Hampshire has them, but unsprayed, With no suspicion in stem end or blossom end Of vitriol or arsenate of lead, And so not good for anything but cider. Her unpruned grapes are flung like lariats Far up the birches out of reach of man.	160
A state producing precious metals, stones, And—writing; none of these except perhaps The precious literature in quantity Or quality to worry the producer About disposing of it. Do you know, Considering the market, there are more Poems produced than any other thing? No wonder poets sometimes have to seem So much more businesslike than businessmen. Their wares are so much harder to get rid of.	165 170
She's one of the two best states in the Union. Vermont's the other. And the two have been Yokefellows in the sap yoke from of old In many Marches. And they lie like wedges,	175
Thick end to thin end and thin end to thick end, And are a figure of the way the strong Of mind and strong of arm should fit together, One thick where one is thin and vice versa.	180

New Hampshire raises the Connecticut	
In a trout hatchery near Canada,	
But soon divides the river with Vermont.	185
Both are delightful states for their absurdly	
Small towns—Lost Nation, Bungey, Muddy Boo,	
Poplin, Still Corners (so called not because	
The place is silent all day long, nor yet	
Because it boasts a whisky still—because	190
It set out once to be a city and still	
Is only corners, crossroads in a wood).	
And I remember one whose name appeared	
Between the pictures on a movie screen	
Election night once in Franconia,	195
When everything had gone Republican	
And Democrats were sore in need of comfort:	
Easton goes Democratic, Wilson 4	
Hughes 2. And everybody to the saddest	
Laughed the loud laugh the big laugh at the little.	200
New York (five million) laughs at Manchester,	
Manchester (sixty or seventy thousand) laughs	
At Littleton (four thousand), Littleton	
Laughs at Franconia (seven hundred), and	
Franconia laughs, I fear—did laugh that night—	205
At Easton. What has Easton left to laugh at,	
And like the actress exclaim "Oh, my God" at?	
There's Bungey; and for Bungey there are towns,	
Whole townships named but without population.	
Anything I can say about New Hampshire	210
Will serve almost as well about Vermont,	
Excepting that they differ in their mountains.	
The Vermont mountains stretch extended straight;	
New Hampshire mountains curl up in a coil.	
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I had been coming to New Hampshire mountains.	215
And here I am and what am I to say?	
Here first my theme becomes embarrassing.	
Emerson said, "The God who made New Hampshire	
Taunted the lofty land with little men."	
Another Massachusetts poet said,	220
"I go no more to summer in New Hampshire.	
I've given up my summer place in Dublin."	
But when I asked to know what ailed New Hampshire,	
She said she couldn't stand the people in it,	
The little men (it's Massachusetts speaking).	225
And when I asked to know what ailed the people,	
She said, "Go read your own books and find out."	
I may as well confess myself the author	
Of several books against the world in general.	
To take them as against a special state	230
Or even nation's to restrict my meaning.	
I'm what is called a sensibilitist,	
Or otherwise an environmentalist.	
I refuse to adapt myself a mite	
To any change from hot to cold, from wet	235
To dry, from poor to rich, or back again.	
I make a virtue of my suffering	
From nearly everything that goes on round me.	
In other words, I know wherever I am,	
Being the creature of literature I am,	240
I shall not lack for pain to keep me awake.	
Kit Marlowe taught me how to say my prayers:	
"Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it."	
Samoa, Russia, Ireland I complain of,	0.45
No less than England, France, and Italy.	245
Because I wrote my novels in New Hampshire	
Is no proof that I aimed them at New Hampshire.	

When I left Massachusetts years ago	
Between two days, the reason why I sought	
New Hampshire, not Connecticut,	250
Rhode Island, New York, or Vermont was this:	
Where I was living then, New Hampshire offered	
The nearest boundary to escape across.	
I hadn't an illusion in my handbag	
About the people being better there	255
Than those I left behind. I thought they weren't.	
I thought they couldn't be. And yet they were.	
I'd sure had no such friends in Massachusetts	
As Hall of Windham, Gay of Atkinson,	
Bartlett of Raymond (now of Colorado),	260
Harris of Derry, and Lynch of Bethlehem.	
The glorious bards of Massachusetts seem	
To want to make New Hampshire people over.	
They taunt the lofty land with little men.	
I don't know what to say about the people.	265
For art's sake one could almost wish them worse	
Rather than better. How are we to write	
The Russian novel in America	
As long as life goes so unterribly?	
There is the pinch from which our only outcry	270
In literature to date is heard to come.	
We get what little misery we can	
Out of not having cause for misery.	
It makes the guild of novel writers sick	
To be expected to be Dostoievskis	275
On nothing worse than too much luck and comfort.	
This is not sorrow, though; it's just the vapors,	
And recognized as such in Russia itself	
Under the new regime, and so forbidden.	

If well it is with Russia, then feel free To say so or be stood against the wall And shot. It's Pollyanna now or death. This, then, is the new freedom we hear tell of; And very sensible. No state can build A literature that shall at once be sound And sad on a foundation of well-being.	280
To show the level of intelligence Among us: it was just a Warren farmer Whose horse had pulled him short up in the road By me, a stranger. This is what he said, From nothing but embarrassment and want Of anything more sociable to say: "You hear those hound dogs sing on Moosilauke? Well, they remind me of the hue and cry	290
We've heard against the Mid-Victorians And never rightly understood till Bryan Retired from politics and joined the chorus. The matter with the Mid-Victorians Seems to have been a man named John L. Darwin." "Go 'long," I said to him, he to his horse.	295
I knew a man who failing as a farmer Burned down his farmhouse for the fire insurance, And spent the proceeds on a telescope To satisfy a lifelong curiosity About our place among the infinities. And how was that for otherworldliness?	305
If I must choose which I would elevate— The people or the already lofty mountains, I'd elevate the already lofty mountains. The only fault I find with old New Hampshire	310

Is that her mountains aren't quite high enough.	
I was not always so; I've come to be so.	
How, to my sorrow, how have I attained	
A height from which to look down critical	
On mountains? What has given me assurance	315
To say what height becomes New Hampshire mounta	ins,
Or any mountains? Can it be some strength	
I feel, as of an earthquake in my back,	
To heave them higher to the morning star?	
Can it be foreign travel in the Alps?	320
Or having seen and credited a moment	
The solid molding of vast peaks of cloud	
Behind the pitiful reality	
Of Lincoln, Lafayette, and Liberty?	
Or some such sense as says how high shall jet	325
The fountain in proportion to the basin?	
No, none of these has raised me to my throne	
Of intellectual dissatisfaction,	
But the sad accident of having seen	
Our actual mountains given in a map	330
Of early times as twice the height they are—	
Ten thousand feet instead of only five—	
Which shows how sad an accident may be.	
Five thousand is no longer high enough.	
Whereas I never had a good idea	335
About improving people in the world,	
Here I am overfertile in suggestion,	
And cannot rest from planning day or night	
How high I'd thrust the peaks in summer snow	
To tap the upper sky and draw a flow	340
Of frosty night air on the vale below	
Down from the stars to freeze the dew as starry.	

The more the sensibilitist I am
The more I seem to want my mountains wild;
The way the wiry gang-boss liked the logjam.
After he'd picked the lock and got it started,
He dodged a log that lifted like an arm
Against the sky to break his back for him,
Then came in dancing, skipping with his life
Across the roar and chaos, and the words
We saw him say along the zigzag journey
Were doubtless as the words we heard him say
On coming nearer: "Wasn't she an i-deal
Son-of-a-bitch? You bet she was an i-deal."

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For all her mountains fall a little short, Her people not quite short enough for Art, She's still New Hampshire, a most restful state.

Lately in converse with a New York alec About the new school of the pseudo-phallic, I found myself in a close corner where I had to make an almost funny choice. "Choose you which you will be-a prude, or puke, Mewling and puking in the public arms." "Me for the hills where I don't have to choose." "But if you had to choose, which would you be?" I wouldn't be a prude afraid of nature. I know a man who took a double ax And went alone against a grove of trees; But his heart failing him, he dropped the ax And ran for shelter quoting Matthew Arnold: "'Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood'; There's been enough shed without shedding mine. Remember Birnam Wood! The wood's in flux!"

He had a special terror of the flux	
That showed itself in dendrophobia.	375
The only decent tree had been to mill	
And educated into boards, he said.	
He knew too well for any earthly use	
The line where man leaves off and nature starts,	
And never overstepped it save in dreams.	380
He stood on the safe side of the line talking—	
Which is sheer Matthew Arnoldism,	
The cult of one who owned himself "a foiled	
Circuitous wanderer," and "took dejectedly	
His seat upon the intellectual throne"—	385
Agreed in frowning on these improvised	
Altars the woods are full of nowadays,	
Again as in the days when Ahaz sinned	
By worship under green trees in the open.	
Scarcely a mile but that I come on one,	390
A black-cheeked stone and stick of rain-washed charcoal.	
Even to say the groves were God's first temples	
Comes too near to Ahaz' sin for safety.	
Nothing not built with hands of course is sacred.	
But here is not a question of what's sacred;	395
Rather of what to face or run away from.	
I'd hate to be a runaway from nature.	
And neither would I choose to be a puke	
Who cares not what he does in company,	
And when he can't do anything, falls back	400
On words, and tries his worst to make words speak	
Louder than actions, and sometimes achieves it.	
It seems a narrow choice the age insists on.	
How about being a good Greek, for instance?	
That course, they tell me, isn't offered this year.	405
"Come, but this isn't choosing—puke or prude?"	

Well, if I have to choose one or the other, I choose to be a plain New Hampshire farmer With an income in cash of, say, a thousand (From, say, a publisher in New York City). It's restful to arrive at a decision, And restful just to think about New Hampshire. At present I am living in Vermont.

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# A STAR IN A STONEBOAT

For Lincoln MacVeagh

Never tell me that not one star of all That slip from heaven at night and softly fall Has been picked up with stones to build a wall.

Some laborer found one faded and stone-cold, And saving that its weight suggested gold And tugged it from his first too certain hold,

He noticed nothing in it to remark. He was not used to handling stars thrown dark And lifeless from an interrupted arc.

He did not recognize in that smooth coal The one thing palpable besides the soul To penetrate the air in which we roll.

He did not see how like a flying thing It brooded ant eggs, and had one large wing, One not so large for flying in a ring,

And a long Bird of Paradise's tail (Though these when not in use to fly and trail It drew back in its body like a snail); 15

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Nor know that he might move it from the spot— The harm was done: from having been star-shot The very nature of the soil was hot	20
And burning to yield flowers instead of grain, Flowers fanned and not put out by all the rain Poured on them by his prayers prayed in vain.	
He moved it roughly with an iron bar, He loaded an old stoneboat with the star And not, as you might think, a flying car,	25
Such as even poets would admit perforce More practical than Pegasus the horse If it could put a star back in its course.	30
He dragged it through the plowed ground at a pace But faintly reminiscent of the race Of jostling rock in interstellar space.	
It went for building stone, and I, as though Commanded in a dream, forever go To right the wrong that this should have been so.	35
Yet ask where else it could have gone as well, I do not know—I cannot stop to tell: He might have left it lying where it fell.	
From following walls I never lift my eye, Except at night to places in the sky Where showers of charted meteors let fly.	40
Some may know what they seek in school and church, And why they seek it there; for what I search I must go measuring stone walls, perch on perch;	45

Sure that though not a star of death and birth, So not to be compared, perhaps, in worth To such resorts of life as Mars and Earth—

Though not, I say, a star of death and sin, It yet has poles, and only needs a spin To show its worldly nature and begin

To chafe and shuffle in my calloused palm And run off in strange tangents with my arm, As fish do with the line in first alarm.

Such as it is, it promises the prize Of the one world complete in any size That I am like to compass, fool or wise.

#### THE CENSUS-TAKER

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I came an errand one cloud-blowing evening To a slab-built, black-paper-covered house Of one room and one window and one door, The only dwelling in a waste cut over A hundred square miles round it in the mountains: And that not dwelt in now by men or women. (It never had been dwelt in, though, by women, So what is this I make a sorrow of?) I came as census-taker to the waste To count the people in it and found none, None in the hundred miles, none in the house, Where I came last with some hope, but not much, After hours' overlooking from the cliffs An emptiness flayed to the very stone. I found no people that dared show themselves, None not in hiding from the outward eye.

The time was autumn, but how anyone Could tell the time of year when every tree That could have dropped a leaf was down itself And nothing but the stump of it was left 20 Now bringing out its rings in sugar of pitch; And every tree up stood a rotting trunk Without a single leaf to spend on autumn, Or branch to whistle after what was spent. Perhaps the wind the more without the help 25 Of breathing trees said something of the time Of year or day the way it swung a door Forever off the latch, as if rude men Passed in and slammed it shut each one behind him For the next one to open for himself. 30 I counted nine I had no right to count (But this was dreamy unofficial counting) Before I made the tenth across the threshold. Where was my supper? Where was anyone's? No lamp was lit. Nothing was on the table. 35 The stove was cold—the stove was off the chimney— And down by one side where it lacked a leg. The people that had loudly passed the door Were people to the ear but not the eye. They were not on the table with their elbows. 40 They were not sleeping in the shelves of bunks. I saw no men there and no bones of men there. I armed myself against such bones as might be With the pitch-blackened stub of an ax-handle I picked up off the straw-dust-covered floor. 45 Not bones, but the ill-fitted window rattled. The door was still because I held it shut While I thought what to do that could be done— About the house—about the people not there.

This house in one year fallen to decay
Filled me with no less sorrow than the houses
Fallen to ruin in ten thousand years
Where Asia wedges Africa from Europe.
Nothing was left to do that I could see
Unless to find that there was no one there
And declare to the cliffs too far for echo,
"The place is desert, and let whoso lurks
In silence, if in this he is aggrieved,
Break silence now or be forever silent.
Let him say why it should not be declared so."
The melancholy of having to count souls
Where they grow fewer and fewer every year
Is extreme where they shrink to none at all.
It must be I want life to go on living.

# THE STAR-SPLITTER

"You know Orion always comes up sideways. Throwing a leg up over our fence of mountains, And rising on his hands, he looks in on me Busy outdoors by lantern-light with something I should have done by daylight, and indeed, After the ground is frozen, I should have done Before it froze, and a gust flings a handful Of waste leaves at my smoky lantern chimney To make fun of my way of doing things, Or else fun of Orion's having caught me. Has a man, I should like to ask, no rights These forces are obliged to pay respect to?" So Brad McLaughlin mingled reckless talk Of heavenly stars with hugger-mugger farming,

Till having failed at hugger-mugger farming He burned his house down for the fire insurance And spent the proceeds on a telescope To satisfy a lifelong curiosity About our place among the infinities.	15
"What do you want with one of those blame things?" I asked him well beforehand. "Don't you get one!"	20
"Don't call it blamed; there isn't anything More blameless in the sense of being less A weapon in our human fight," he said. "I'll have one if I sell my farm to buy it."	25
There where he moved the rocks to plow the ground And plowed between the rocks he couldn't move, Few farms changed hands; so rather than spend years Trying to sell his farm and then not selling,	2,
He burned his house down for the fire insurance And bought the telescope with what it came to. He had been heard to say by several: "The best thing that we're put here for's to see; The strongest thing that's given us to see with's	30
A telescope. Someone in every town Seems to me owes it to the town to keep one. In Littleton it may as well be me." After such loose talk it was no surprise When he did what he did and burned his house down.	35
Mean laughter went about the town that day To let him know we weren't the least imposed on, And he could wait—we'd see to him tomorrow. But the first thing next morning we reflected If one by one we counted people out	40
For the least sin, it wouldn't take us long	45

To get so we had no one left to live with. For to be social is to be forgiving. Our thief, the one who does our stealing from us. We don't cut off from coming to church suppers, But what we miss we go to him and ask for. He promptly gives it back, that is if still Uneaten, unworn out, or undisposed of. It wouldn't do to be too hard on Brad About his telescope. Beyond the age Of being given one for Christmas gift, He had to take the best way he knew how To find himself in one. Well, all we said was He took a strange thing to be roguish over. Some sympathy was wasted on the house, A good old-timer dating back along; But a house isn't sentient; the house Didn't feel anything. And if it did, Why not regard it as a sacrifice, And an old-fashioned sacrifice by fire, Instead of a new-fashioned one at auction?

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Out of a house and so out of a farm
At one stroke (of a match), Brad had to turn
To earn a living on the Concord railroad,
As under-ticket-agent at a station
Where his job, when he wasn't selling tickets,
Was setting out, up track and down, not plants
As on a farm, but planets, evening stars
That varied in their hue from red to green.

He got a good glass for six hundred dollars. His new job gave him leisure for stargazing. Often he bid me come and have a look

Up the brass barrel, velvet black inside,	
At a star quaking in the other end.	
I recollect a night of broken clouds	
And underfoot snow melted down to ice,	80
And melting further in the wind to mud.	
Bradford and I had out the telescope.	
We spread our two legs as we spread its three,	
Pointed our thoughts the way we pointed it,	
And standing at our leisure till the day broke,	85
Said some of the best things we ever said.	
That telescope was christened the Star-Splitter,	
Because it didn't do a thing but split	
A star in two or three, the way you split	
A globule of quicksilver in your hand	90
With one stroke of your finger in the middle.	
It's a star-splitter if there ever was one,	
And ought to do some good if splitting stars	
'Sa thing to be compared with splitting wood.	
We've looked and looked, but after all where are we?	95
Do we know any better where we are,	

Do we know any better where we are,
And how it stands between the night tonight
And a man with a smoky lantern chimney?
How different from the way it ever stood?

# MAPLE

Her teacher's certainty it must be Mabel Made Maple first take notice of her name. She asked her father and he told her, "Maple—Maple is right."

"But teacher told the school There's no such name."

"Teachers don't know as much	5
As fathers about children, you tell teacher.	_
You tell her that it's M-A-P-L-E.	
You ask her if she knows a maple tree.	
Well, you were named after a maple tree.	
Your mother named you. You and she just saw	10
Each other in passing in the room upstairs,	
One coming this way into life, and one	
Going the other out of life—you know?	
So you can't have much recollection of her.	
She had been having a long look at you.	15
She put her finger in your cheek so hard	
It must have made your dimple there, and said,	
'Maple.' I said it too: 'Yes, for her name.'	
She nodded. So we're sure there's no mistake.	
I don't know what she wanted it to mean,	20
But it seems like some word she left to bid you	
Be a good girl—be like a maple tree.	
How like a maple tree's for us to guess.	
Or for a little girl to guess sometime.	
Not now—at least I shouldn't try too hard now.	25
By and by I will tell you all I know	
About the different trees, and something, too,	
About your mother that perhaps may help."	
Dangerous self-arousing words to sow.	
Luckily all she wanted of her name then	30
Was to rebuke her teacher with it next day,	
And give the teacher a scare as from her father.	
Anything further had been wasted on her,	
Or so he tried to think to avoid blame.	25
She would forget it. She all but forgot it.	35
What he sowed with her slept so long a sleep,	
And came so near death in the dark of years,	

That when it woke and came to life again The flower was different from the parent seed. It came back vaguely at the glass one day, 40 As she stood saying her name over aloud, Striking it gently across her lowered eves To make it go well with the way she looked. What was it about her name? Its strangeness lay In having too much meaning. Other names, 45 As Lesley, Carol, Irma, Marjorie, Signified nothing. Rose could have a meaning, But hadn't as it went. (She knew a Rose.) This difference from other names it was Made people notice it—and notice her. 50 (They either noticed it, or got it wrong.) Her problem was to find out what it asked In dress or manner of the girl who bore it. If she could form some notion of her mother— What she had thought was lovely, and what good. 55 This was her mother's childhood home: The house one story high in front, three stories On the end it presented to the road. (The arrangement made a pleasant sunny cellar.) Her mother's bedroom was her father's still, 60 Where she could watch her mother's picture fading. Once she found for a bookmark in the Bible A maple leaf she thought must have been laid In wait for her there. She read every word Of the two pages it was pressed between, 65 As if it was her mother speaking to her. But forgot to put the leaf back in closing And lost the place never to read again. She was sure, though, there had been nothing in it.

So she looked for herself, as everyone Looks for himself, more or less outwardly. And her self-seeking, fitful though it was, May still have been what led her on to read. And think a little, and get some city schooling. She learned shorthand, whatever shorthand may Have had to do with it—she sometimes wondered. So, till she found herself in a strange place For the name Maple to have brought her to, Taking dictation on a paper pad And, in the pauses when she raised her eyes, Watching out of a nineteenth story window An airship laboring with unshiplike motion And a vague all-disturbing roar above the river Beyond the highest city built with hands. Someone was saying in such natural tones She almost wrote the words down on her knee, "Do you know you remind me of a tree— A maple tree?"

"Because my name is Maple?"

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"Isn't it Mabel? I thought it was Mabel."

"No doubt you've heard the office call me Mabel. I have to let them call me what they like."

They were both stirred that he should have divined Without the name her personal mystery. It made it seem as if there must be something She must have missed herself. So they were married, And took the fancy home with them to live by.

They went on pilgrimage once to her father's (The house one story high in front, three stories On the side it presented to the road)

To see if there was not some special tree She might have overlooked. They could find none, Not so much as a single tree for shade, Let alone grove of trees for sugar orchard. She told him of the bookmark maple leaf In the big Bible, and all she remembered Of the place marked with it—"Wave offering, Something about wave offering, it said."	100
"You've never asked your father outright, have you?"	
"I have, and been put off sometime, I think." (This was her faded memory of the way Once long ago her father had put himself off.)	110
"Because no telling but it may have been Something between your father and your mother Not meant for us at all."	
"Not meant for me?	
Where would the fairness be in giving me A name to carry for life and never know  The secret of?"	115
"And then it may have been	
Something a father couldn't tell a daughter	
As well as could a mother. And again	
It may have been their one lapse into fancy	120
'Twould be too bad to make him sorry for	
By bringing it up to him when he was too old.	
Your father feels us round him with our questing,	
And holds us off unnecessarily,	
As if he didn't know what little thing	125
Might lead us on to a discovery.	
It was as personal as he could be	
About the way he saw it was with you	

To say your mother, had she lived, would be	
As far again as from being born to bearing."	130
"Just one look more with what you say in mind,	
And I give up"; which last look came to nothing.	
But though they now gave up the search forever,	
They clung to what one had seen in the other	
By inspiration. It proved there was something.	135
They kept their thoughts away from when the maples	
Stood uniform in buckets, and the steam	
Of sap and snow rolled off the sugarhouse.	
When they made her related to the maples,	
It was the tree the autumn fire ran through	140
And swept of leathern leaves, but left the bark	
Unscorched, unblackened, even, by any smoke.	
They always took their holidays in autumn.	
Once they came on a maple in a glade,	
Standing alone with smooth arms lifted up,	145
And every leaf of foliage she'd worn	
Laid scarlet and pale pink about her feet.	
But its age kept them from considering this one.	
Twenty-five years ago at Maple's naming	
It hardly could have been a two-leaved seedling	150
The next cow might have licked up out at pasture.	
Could it have been another maple like it?	
They hovered for a moment near discovery,	
Figurative enough to see the symbol,	
But lacking faith in anything to mean	155
The same at different times to different people.	
Perhaps a filial diffidence partly kept them	
From thinking it could be a thing so bridal.	
And anyway it came too late for Maple.	
She used her hands to cover up her eyes.	160

"We would not see the secret if we could now: We are not looking for it any more."

Thus had a name with meaning, given in death,
Made a girl's marriage, and ruled in her life.
No matter that the meaning was not clear.

A name with meaning could bring up a child,
Taking the child out of the parents' hands.
Better a meaningless name, I should say,
As leaving more to nature and happy chance.
Name children some names and see what you do.

### THE AX-HELVE

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I've known ere now an interfering branch Of alder catch my lifted ax behind me. But that was in the woods, to hold my hand From striking at another alder's roots, And that was, as I say, an alder branch. This was a man, Baptiste, who stole one day Behind me on the snow in my own yard Where I was working at the chopping block, And cutting nothing not cut down already. He caught my ax expertly on the rise, When all my strength put forth was in his favor, Held it a moment where it was, to calm me, Then took it from me—and I let him take it. I didn't know him well enough to know What it was all about. There might be something He had in mind to say to a bad neighbor He might prefer to say to him disarmed. But all he had to tell me in French-English Was what he thought of—not me, but my ax,

Me only as I took my ax to heart.

It was the bad ax-helve someone had sold me—
"Made on machine," he said, plowing the grain
With a thick thumbnail to show how it ran
Across the handle's long-drawn serpentine,
Like the two strokes across a dollar sign.
"You give her one good crack, she's snap raght off.
Den where's your hax-ead flying t'rough de hair?"
Admitted; and yet, what was that to him?

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"Come on my house and I put you one in What's las' awhile—good hick'ry what's grow crooked, De second growt' I cut myself—tough, tough!"

Something to sell? That wasn't how it sounded.

"Den when you say you come? It's cost you nothing. Tonaght?"

As well tonight as any night.

Beyond an over-warmth of kitchen stove
My welcome differed from no other welcome.
Baptiste knew best why I was where I was.
So long as he would leave enough unsaid,
I shouldn't mind his being overjoyed
(If overjoyed he was) at having got me
Where I must judge if what he knew about an ax
That not everybody else knew was to count
For nothing in the measure of a neighbor.
Hard if, though cast away for life with Yankees,
A Frenchman couldn't get his human rating!

Mrs. Baptiste came in and rocked a chair That had as many motions as the world: One back and forward, in and out of shadow,

That got her nownere; one more gradual,	
Sideways, that would have run her on the stove 5	0
In time, had she not realized her danger	
And caught herself up bodily, chair and all,	
And set herself back where she started from.	
"She ain't spick too much Henglish—dat's too bad."	
I was afraid, in brightening first on me,	55
Then on Baptiste, as if she understood	
What passed between us, she was only feigning.	
Baptiste was anxious for her; but no more	
Than for himself, so placed he couldn't hope	
To keep his bargain of the morning with me	60
In time to keep me from suspecting him	
Of really never having meant to keep it.	
Needlessly soon he had his ax-helves out,	
A quiverful to choose from, since he wished me	
To have the best he had, or had to spare—	65
Not for me to ask which, when what he took	
Had beauties he had to point me out at length	
To insure their not being wasted on me.	
He liked to have it slender as a whipstock,	
Free from the least knot, equal to the strain	70
Of bending like a sword across the knee.	
He showed me that the lines of a good helve	
Were native to the grain before the knife	
Expressed them, and its curves were no false curves	
Put on it from without. And there its strength lay	75
For the hard work. He chafed its long white body	
From end to end with his rough hand shut round it.	
He tried it at the eyehole in the ax-head.	
"Hahn, hahn," he mused, "don't need much taking down	,,,
Baptiste knew how to make a short job long	80
Dapuste knew now to make a snort job long	80

For love of it, and yet not waste time either.

Do you know, what we talked about was knowledge?
Baptiste on his defense about the children
He kept from school, or did his best to keep—
Whatever school and children and our doubts
Of laid-on education had to do
With the curves of his ax-helves and his having
Used these unscrupulously to bring me
To see for once the inside of his house.
Was I desired in friendship, partly as someone
To leave it to, whether the right to hold
Such doubts of education should depend
Upon the education of those who held them?
But now he brushed the shavings from his knee
And stood the ax there on its horse's hoof,
Erect, but not without its waves, as when

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Erect, but not without its waves, as when
The snake stood up for evil in the Garden—
Top-heavy with a heaviness his short,
Thick hand made light of, steel-blue chin drawn down
And in a little—a French touch in that.
Baptiste drew back and squinted at it, pleased:
"See how she's cock her head!"

### THE GRINDSTONE

Having a wheel and four legs of its own Has never availed the cumbersome grindstone To get it anywhere that I can see. These hands have helped it go, and even race; Not all the motion, though, they ever lent, Not all the miles it may have thought it went,

Have got it one step from the starting place.	
It stands beside the same old apple tree.	
The shadow of the apple tree is thin	
Upon it now; its feet are fast in snow.	10
All other farm machinery's gone in,	
And some of it on no more legs and wheel	
Than the grindstone can boast to stand or go.	
(I'm thinking chiefly of the wheelbarrow.)	
For months it hasn't known the taste of steel	15
Washed down with rusty water in a tin.	
But standing outdoors hungry, in the cold,	
Except in towns at night, is not a sin.	
And, anyway, its standing in the yard	
Under a ruinous live apple tree	20
Has nothing any more to do with me,	
Except that I remember how of old	
One summer day, all day I drove it hard,	
And someone mounted on it rode it hard,	
And he and I between us ground a blade.	25
I gave it the preliminary spin,	
And poured on water (tears it might have been);	
And when it almost gaily jumped and flowed,	
A Father-Time-like man got on and rode,	
Armed with a scythe and spectacles that glowed.	30
He turned on willpower to increase the load	
And slow me down—and I abruptly slowed,	
Like coming to a sudden railroad station.	
I changed from hand to hand in desperation.	
I wondered what machine of ages gone	35
This represented an improvement on.	
For all I knew it may have sharpened spears	
And arrowheads itself. Much use for years	

Had gradually worn it an oblate
Spheroid that kicked and struggled in its gait,
Appearing to return me hate for hate
(But I forgive it now as easily
As any other boyhood enemy
Whose pride has failed to get him anywhere).
I wondered who it was the man thought ground—
The one who held the wheel back or the one
Who gave his life to keep it going round?
I wondered if he really thought it fair
For him to have the say when we were done.
Such were the bitter thoughts to which I turned.

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Not for myself was I so much concerned. Oh no!—although, of course, I could have found A better way to pass the afternoon Than grinding discord out of a grindstone, And beating insects at their gritty tune. Nor was I for the man so much concerned. Once when the grindstone almost jumped its bearing It looked as if he might be badly thrown And wounded on his blade. So far from caring, I laughed inside, and only cranked the faster (It ran as if it wasn't greased but glued); I'd welcome any moderate disaster That might be calculated to postpone What evidently nothing could conclude. The thing that made me more and more afraid Was that we'd ground it sharp and hadn't known, And now were only wasting precious blade. And when he raised it dripping once and tried The creepy edge of it with wary touch, And viewed it over his glasses funny-eyed,

Only disinterestedly to decide It needed a turn more, I could have cried Wasn't there danger of a turn too much? Mightn't we make it worse instead of better? I was for leaving something to the whetter. What if it wasn't all it should be? I'd Be satisfied if he'd be satisfied.

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#### PAUL'S WIFE

To drive Paul out of any lumber camp All that was needed was to say to him, "How is the wife, Paul?"—and he'd disappear. Some said it was because he had no wife, And hated to be twitted on the subject; Others because he'd come within a day Or so of having one, and then been jilted; Others because he'd had one once, a good one, Who'd run away with someone else and left him; And others still because he had one now He only had to be reminded of— He was all duty to her in a minute: He had to run right off to look her up, As if to say, "That's so, how is my wife? I hope she isn't getting into mischief." No one was anxious to get rid of Paul. He'd been the hero of the mountain camps Ever since, just to show them, he had slipped The bark of a whole tamarack off whole, As clean as boys do off a willow twig To make a willow whistle on a Sunday In April by subsiding meadow brooks. They seemed to ask him just to see him go,

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"How is the wife, Paul?" and he always went. He never stopped to murder anyone Who asked the question. He just disappeared— Nobody knew in what direction. Although it wasn't usually long Before they heard of him in some new camp, The same Paul at the same old feats of logging. The question everywhere was why should Paul Object to being asked a civil question— A man you could say almost anything to Short of a fighting word. You have the answers. And there was one more not so fair to Paul: That Paul had married a wife not his equal. Paul was ashamed of her. To match a hero She would have had to be a heroine: Instead of which she was some half-breed squaw. But if the story Murphy told was true, She wasn't anything to be ashamed of.

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You know Paul could do wonders. Everyone's Heard how he thrashed the horses on a load That wouldn't budge, until they simply stretched Their rawhide harness from the load to camp. Paul told the boss the load would be all right, "The sun will bring your load in"—and it did—By shrinking the rawhide to natural length. That's what is called a stretcher. But I guess The one about his jumping so's to land With both his feet at once against the ceiling, And then land safely right side up again, Back on the floor, is fact or pretty near fact. Well, this is such a yarn. Paul sawed his wife Out of a white-pine log. Murphy was there

And, as you might say, saw the lady born. Paul worked at anything in lumbering. He'd been hard at it taking boards away For—I forget—the last ambitious sawyer To want to find out if he couldn't pile 60 The lumber on Paul till Paul begged for mercy. They'd sliced the first slab off a big butt log, And the sawyer had slammed the carriage back To slam end-on again against the saw teeth. To judge them by the way they caught themselves 65 When they saw what had happened to the log, They must have had a guilty expectation Something was going to go with their slambanging. Something had left a broad black streak of grease On the new wood the whole length of the log 70 Except, perhaps, a foot at either end. But when Paul put his finger in the grease, It wasn't grease at all, but a long slot. The log was hollow. They were sawing pine. "First time I ever saw a hollow pine. 75 That comes of having Paul around the place. Take it to hell for me," the sawyer said. Everyone had to have a look at it, And tell Paul what he ought to do about it. (They treated it as his.) "You take a jackknife, 80 And spread the opening, and you've got a dugout All dug to go a-fishing in." To Paul The hollow looked too sound and clean and empty Ever to have housed birds or beasts or bees. There was no entrance for them to get in by. 85 It looked to him like some new kind of hollow He thought he'd better take his jackknife to.

So after work that evening he came back And let enough light into it by cutting To see if it was empty. He made out in there 90 A slender length of pith, or was it pith? It might have been the skin a snake had cast And left stood up on end inside the tree The hundred years the tree must have been growing. More cutting and he had this in both hands, 95 And looking from it to the pond nearby, Paul wondered how it would respond to water. Not a breeze stirred, but just the breath of air He made in walking slowly to the beach Blew it once off his hands and almost broke it. 100 He laid it at the edge, where it could drink. At the first drink it rustled and grew limp. At the next drink it grew invisible. Paul dragged the shallows for it with his fingers, And thought it must have melted. It was gone. 105 And then beyond the open water, dim with midges, Where the log drive lay pressed against the boom, It slowly rose a person, rose a girl, Her wet hair heavy on her like a helmet, Who, leaning on a log, looked back at Paul. 110 And that made Paul in turn look back To see if it was anyone behind him That she was looking at instead of him. (Murphy had been there watching all the time, But from a shed where neither of them could see him.) 115 There was a moment of suspense in birth When the girl seemed too waterlogged to live, Before she caught her first breath with a gasp And laughed. Then she climbed slowly to her feet,

And walked off, talking to herself or Paul, Across the logs like backs of alligators, Paul taking after her around the pond.	120
Next evening Murphy and some other fellows Got drunk, and tracked the pair up Catamount, From the bare top of which there is a view To other hills across a kettle valley. And there, well after dark, let Murphy tell it, They saw Paul and his creature keeping house.	125
It was the only glimpse that anyone Has had of Paul and her since Murphy saw them Falling in love across the twilight millpond. More than a mile across the wilderness	130
They sat together halfway up a cliff In a small niche let into it, the girl Brightly, as if a star played on the place, Paul darkly, like her shadow. All the light Was from the girl herself, though, not from a star, As was apparent from what happened next. All those great ruffians put their throats together, And let out a loud yell, and threw a bottle, As a brute tribute of respect to beauty. Of course the bottle fell short by a mile,	135 140
But the shout reached the girl and put her light out. She went out like a firefly, and that was all. So there were witnesses that Paul was married, And not to anyone to be ashamed of. Everyone had been wrong in judging Paul.	145
Murphy told me Paul put on all those airs About his wife to keep her to himself. Paul was what's called a terrible possessor.	150

Owning a wife with him meant owning her. She wasn't anybody else's business, Either to praise her or so much as name her, And he'd thank people not to think of her. Murphy's idea was that a man like Paul Wouldn't be spoken to about a wife In any way the world knew how to speak.

#### WILD GRAPES

What tree may not the fig be gathered from? The grape may not be gathered from the birch? It's all you know the grape, or know the birch. As a girl gathered from the birch myself Equally with my weight in grapes, one autumn, I ought to know what tree the grape is fruit of. I was born, I suppose, like anyone, And grew to be a little boyish girl My brother could not always leave at home. But that beginning was wiped out in fear The day I swung suspended with the grapes, And was come after like Eurydice And brought down safely from the upper regions; And the life I live now's an extra life I can waste as I please on whom I please. So if you see me celebrate two birthdays, And give myself out as two different ages, One of them five years younger than I look—

One day my brother led me to a glade Where a white birch he knew of stood alone, Wearing a thin headdress of pointed leaves, And heavy on her heavy hair behind,

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Against ner neck, all offiament of grapes.	
Grapes, I knew grapes from having seen them last year.	
One bunch of them, and there began to be	25
Bunches all round me growing in white birches,	
The way they grew round Leif the Lucky's German;	
Mostly as much beyond my lifted hands, though,	
As the moon used to seem when I was younger,	
And only freely to be had for climbing.	30
My brother did the climbing; and at first	
Threw me down grapes to miss and scatter	
And have to hunt for in sweet fern and hardhack;	
Which gave him some time to himself to eat,	
But not so much, perhaps, as a boy needed.	35
So then, to make me wholly self-supporting,	
He climbed still higher and bent the tree to earth	
And put it in my hands to pick my own grapes.	
"Here, take a treetop, I'll get down another.	
Hold on with all your might when I let go."	40
I said I had the tree. It wasn't true.	
The opposite was true. The tree had me.	
The minute it was left with me alone,	
It caught me up as if I were the fish	
And it the fishpole. So I was translated,	45
To loud cries from my brother of "Let go!	
Don't you know anything, you girl? Let go!"	
But I, with something of the baby grip	
Acquired ancestrally in just such trees	
When wilder mothers than our wildest now	50
Hung babies out on branches by the hands	
To dry or wash or tan, I don't know which	
(You'll have to ask an evolutionist)—	
I held on uncomplainingly for life.	
My brother tried to make me laugh to help me.	55

"What are you doing up there in those grapes? Don't be afraid. A few of them won't hurt you. I mean, they won't pick you if you don't them." Much danger of my picking anything! By that time I was pretty well reduced 60 To a philosophy of hang-and-let-hang. "Now you know how it feels," my brother said, "To be a bunch of fox grapes, as they call them. That when it thinks it has escaped the fox By growing where it shouldn't—on a birch. 65 Where a fox wouldn't think to look for it— And if he looked and found it, couldn't reach it— Just then come you and I to gather it. Only you have the advantage of the grapes In one way: you have one more stem to cling by, 70 And promise more resistance to the picker."

One by one I lost off my hat and shoes, And still I clung. I let my head fall back, And shut my eyes against the sun, my ears Against my brother's nonsense. "Drop," he said, 75 "I'll catch you in my arms. It isn't far." (Stated in lengths of him it might not be.) "Drop or I'll shake the tree and shake you down." Grim silence on my part as I sank lower, My small wrists stretching till they showed the banjo strings. "Why, if she isn't serious about it! Hold tight awhile till I think what to do. I'll bend the tree down and let you down by it." I don't know much about the letting down; But once I felt ground with my stocking feet 85 And the world came revolving back to me, I know I looked long at my curled-up fingers,

Before I straightened them and brushed the bark off. My brother said: "Don't you weigh anything? Try to weigh something next time, so you won't Be run off with by birch trees into space."	90
It wasn't my not weighing anything	
So much as my not knowing anything—	
My brother had been nearer right before.	
I had not taken the first step in knowledge;	95
I had not learned to let go with the hands,	
As still I have not learned to with the heart,	
And have no wish to with the heart—nor need,	
That I can see. The mind—is not the heart.	
I may yet live, as I know others live,	100
To wish in vain to let go with the mind—	
Of cares, at night, to sleep; but nothing tells me	
That I need learn to let go with the heart.	
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## PLACE FOR A THIRD

Nothing to say to all those marriages!

She had made three herself to three of his.

The score was even for them, three to three.

But come to die she found she cared so much:

She thought of children in a burial row;

Three children in a burial row were sad.

One man's three women in a burial row

Somehow made her impatient with the man.

And so she said to Laban, "You have done

A good deal right; don't do the last thing wrong.

Don't make me lie with those two other women."

Laban said, No, he would not make her lie

With anyone but that she had a mind to. If that was how she felt, of course, he said. She went her way. But Laban having caught This glimpse of lingering person in Eliza, And anxious to make all he could of it With something he remembered in himself, Tried to think how he could exceed his promise, And give good measure to the dead, though thankless. If that was how she felt, he kept repeating. His first thought under pressure was a grave In a new-boughten grave plot by herself, Under he didn't care how great a stone: He'd sell a yoke of steers to pay for it. And weren't there special cemetery flowers, That, once grief sets to growing, grief may rest: The flowers will go on with grief awhile, And no one seem neglecting or neglected? A prudent grief will not despise such aids. He thought of evergreen and everlasting. And then he had a thought worth many of these. Somewhere must be the grave of the young boy Who married her for playmate more than helpmate, And sometimes laughed at what it was between them. How would she like to sleep her last with him? Where was his grave? Did Laban know his name?

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He found the grave a town or two away,
The headstone cut with John, Beloved Husband,
Beside it room reserved; the say a sister's,
A never-married sister's of that husband,
Whether Eliza would be welcome there.
The dead was bound to silence: ask the sister.
So Laban saw the sister, and, saying nothing

Of where Eliza wanted not to lie,	45
And who had thought to lay her with her first love,	
Begged simply for the grave. The sister's face	
Fell all in wrinkles of responsibility.	
She wanted to do right. She'd have to think.	
Laban was old and poor, yet seemed to care;	50
And she was old and poor—but she cared, too.	
They sat. She cast one dull, old look at him,	
Then turned him out to go on other errands	
She said he might attend to in the village,	
While she made up her mind how much she cared—	55
And how much Laban cared—and why he cared.	
(She made shrewd eyes to see where he came in.)	
She'd looked Eliza up her second time, A widow at her second husband's grave, And offered her a home to rest awhile	60
Before she went the poor man's widow's way,	
Housekeeping for the next man out of wedlock.	
She and Eliza had been friends through all.	
Who was she to judge marriage in a world	65
Whose Bible's so confused in marriage counsel?	65
The sister had not come across this Laban;	
A decent product of life's ironing-out;	
She must not keep him waiting. Time would press	
Between the death day and the funeral day.	
So when she saw him coming in the street	70
She hurried her decision to be ready	
To meet him with his answer at the door.	
Laban had known about what it would be	
From the way she had set her poor old mouth,	
To do, as she had put it, what was right.	75

She gave it through the screen door closed between them:

"No, not with John. There wouldn't be no sense. Eliza's had too many other men."

Laban was forced to fall back on his plan To buy Eliza a plot to lie alone in: Which gives him for himself a choice of lots When his time comes to die and settle down.

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## TWO WITCHES

## I. THE WITCH OF COÖS

I stayed the night for shelter at a farm Behind the mountain, with a mother and son. Two old-believers. They did all the talking.

MOTHER. Folks think a witch who has familiar spirits She could call up to pass a winter evening, But won't, should be burned at the stake or something. Summoning spirits isn't "Button, button, Who's got the button," I would have them know.

SON. Mother can make a common table rear And kick with two legs like an army mule.

And when I've done it, what good have I done? MOTHER. Rather than tip a table for you, let me Tell you what Ralle the Sioux Control once told me. He said the dead had souls, but when I asked him How could that be—I thought the dead were souls— He broke my trance. Don't that make you suspicious That there's something the dead are keeping back? Yes, there's something the dead are keeping back.

son. You wouldn't want to tell him what we have
Up attic, mother?
MOTHER. Bones—a skeleton. 20
SON. But the headboard of mother's bed is pushed Against the attic door: the door is nailed. It's harmless. Mother hears it in the night, Halting perplexed behind the barrier Of door and headboard. Where it wants to get  25 Is back into the cellar where it came from.
MOTHER. We'll never let them, will we, son? We'll never!
And carried itself like a pile of dishes Up one flight from the cellar to the kitchen, Another from the kitchen to the bedroom, Another from the bedroom to the attic, Right past both father and mother, and neither stopped it. Father had gone upstairs; mother was downstairs. I was a baby: I don't know where I was.
MOTHER. The only fault my husband found with me— I went to sleep before I went to bed, Especially in winter when the bed Might just as well be ice and the clothes snow. The night the bones came up the cellar stairs  40 Toffile had gone to bed alone and left me, But left an open door to cool the room off So as to sort of turn me out of it. I was just coming to myself enough

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To wonder where the cold was coming from,

When I heard Toffile upstairs in the bedroom And thought I heard him downstairs in the cellar.

The board we had laid down to walk dry-shod on When there was water in the cellar in spring Struck the hard cellar bottom. And then someone Began the stairs, two footsteps for each step, The way a man with one leg and a crutch, Or a little child, comes up. It wasn't Toffile: It wasn't anyone who could be there. The bulkhead double doors were double-locked And swollen tight and buried under snow. The cellar windows were banked up with sawdust And swollen tight and buried under snow. It was the bones. I knew them—and good reason. My first impulse was to get to the knob And hold the door. But the bones didn't try The door; they halted helpless on the landing, Waiting for things to happen in their favor. The faintest restless rustling ran all through them. I never could have done the thing I did If the wish hadn't been too strong in me To see how they were mounted for this walk. I had a vision of them put together Not like a man, but like a chandelier. So suddenly I flung the door wide on him. A moment he stood balancing with emotion, And all but lost himself. (A tongue of fire Flashed out and licked along his upper teeth. Smoke rolled inside the sockets of his eyes.) Then he came at me with one hand outstretched, The way he did in life once; but this time I struck the hand off brittle on the floor, And fell back from him on the floor myself. The finger-pieces slid in all directions.

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(Where did I see one of those pieces lately?	80
Hand me my button box—it must be there.)	
I sat up on the floor and shouted, "Toffile,	
It's coming up to you." It had its choice	
Of the door to the cellar or the hall.	
It took the hall door for the novelty,	85
And set off briskly for so slow a thing,	
Still going every which way in the joints, though,	
So that it looked like lightning or a scribble,	
From the slap I had just now given its hand.	
I listened till it almost climbed the stairs	90
From the hall to the only finished bedroom,	
Before I got up to do anything;	
Then ran and shouted, "Shut the bedroom door,	
Toffile, for my sake!" "Company?" he said,	
"Don't make me get up; I'm too warm in bed."	95
So lying forward weakly on the handrail	
I pushed myself upstairs, and in the light	
(The kitchen had been dark) I had to own	
I could see nothing. "Toffile, I don't see it.	
It's with us in the room, though. It's the bones."	100
"What bones?" "The cellar bones—out of the grave."	
That made him throw his bare legs out of bed	
And sit up by me and take hold of me.	
I wanted to put out the light and see	
If I could see it, or else mow the room,	105
With our arms at the level of our knees,	
And bring the chalk-pile down. "I'll tell you what—	
It's looking for another door to try.	
The uncommonly deep snow has made him think	
Of his old song, 'The Wild Colonial Boy,'	110
He always used to sing along the tote road.	
He's after an open door to get outdoors.	

Let's trap him with an open door up attic."
Toffile agreed to that, and sure enough,
Almost the moment he was given an opening, 115
The steps began to climb the attic stairs.
I heard them. Toffile didn't seem to hear them.
"Quick!" I slammed to the door and held the knob.
"Toffile, get nails." I made him nail the door shut
And push the headboard of the bed against it.
Then we asked was there anything
Up attic that we'd ever want again.
The attic was less to us than the cellar.
If the bones liked the attic, let them have it.
Let them stay in the attic. When they sometimes 125
Come down the stairs at night and stand perplexed
Behind the door and headboard of the bed,
Brushing their chalky skull with chalky fingers,
With sounds like the dry rattling of a shutter,
That's what I sit up in the dark to say—
To no one anymore since Toffile died.
Let them stay in the attic since they went there.
I promised Toffile to be cruel to them
For helping them be cruel once to him.
SON. We think they had a grave down in the cellar. 13
MOTHER. We know they had a grave down in the cellar.
son. We never could find out whose bones they were.
MOTHER. Yes, we could too, son. Tell the truth for once.
They were a man's his father killed for me.
I mean a man he killed instead of me.
i mean a man and a land
The least I could do was help dig their grave.
The least I could do was help dig their grave. We were about it one night in the cellar.

To tell the truth, suppose the time had come.	
Son looks surprised to see me end a lie	145
We'd kept up all these years between ourselves	
So as to have it ready for outsiders.	
But tonight I don't care enough to lie—	
I don't remember why I ever cared.	
Toffile, if he were here, I don't believe	150
Could tell you why he ever cared himself	
She hadn't found the finger-bone she wanted	
Among the buttons poured out in her lap.	
I verified the name next morning: Toffile.	
The rural letter box said Toffile Laiway.	155

#### THE PAUPER WITCH OF GRAFTON

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Now that they've got it settled whose I be, I'm going to tell them something they won't like: They've got it settled wrong, and I can prove it. Flattered I must be to have two towns fighting To make a present of me to each other. They don't dispose me, either one of them, To spare them any trouble. Double trouble's Always the witch's motto anyway. I'll double theirs for both of them—you watch me. They'll find they've got the whole thing to do over, 10 That is, if facts is what they want to go by: They set a lot (now don't they?) by a record Of Arthur Amy's having once been up For Hog Reeve in March Meeting here in Warren. I could have told them any time this twelvemonth 15 The Arthur Amy I was married to Couldn't have been the one they say was up

In Warren at March Meeting, for the reason He wa'n't but fifteen at the time they say. The Arthur Amy I was married to 20 Voted the only times he ever voted, Which wasn't many, in the town of Wentworth. One of the times was when 'twas in the warrant To see if the town wanted to take over The tote road to our clearing where we lived. 25 I'll tell you who'd remember—Heman Lapish. Their Arthur Amy was the father of mine. So now they've dragged it through the law courts once, I guess they'd better drag it through again. Wentworth and Warren's both good towns to live in, 30 Only I happen to prefer to live In Wentworth from now on; and when all's said, Right's right, and the temptation to do right When I can hurt someone by doing it Has always been too much for me, it has. 35 I know of some folks that'd be set up At having in their town a noted witch: But most would have to think of the expense That even I would be. They ought to know That as a witch I'd often milk a bat 40 And that'd be enough to last for days. It'd make my position stronger, think, If I was to consent to give some sign To make it surer that I was a witch? It wa'n't no sign, I s'pose, when Mallice Huse 45 Said that I took him out in his old age And rode all over everything on him Until I'd had him worn to skin and bones, And if I'd left him hitched unblanketed In front of one Town Hall, I'd left him hitched 50

In front of every one in Grafton County. Some cried shame on me not to blanket him, The poor old man. It would have been all right If someone hadn't said to gnaw the posts He stood beside and leave his trademark on them. 55 So they could recognize them. Not a post That they could hear tell of was scarified. They made him keep on gnawing till he whined. Then that same smarty someone said to look— He'd bet Huse was a cribber and had gnawed 60 The crib he slept in—and as sure's you're born They found he'd gnawed the four posts of his bed, All four of them to splinters. What did that prove? Not that he hadn't gnawed the hitching posts He said he had, besides, Because a horse 65 Gnaws in the stable ain't no proof to me He don't gnaw trees and posts and fences too. But everybody took it for a proof. I was a strapping girl of twenty then. The smarty someone who spoiled everything 70 Was Arthur Amy. You know who he was. That was the way he started courting me. He never said much after we were married, But I mistrusted he was none too proud Of having interfered in the Huse business. 75 I guess he found he got more out of me By having me a witch. Or something happened To turn him round. He got to saying things To undo what he'd done and make it right, Like, "No, she ain't come back from kiting yet. 80 Last night was one of her nights out. She's kiting. She thinks when the wind makes a night of it She might as well herself." But he liked best

To let on he was plagued to death with me: If anyone had seen me coming home 85 Over the ridgepole, 'stride of a broomstick, As often as he had in the tail of the night, He guessed they'd know what he had to put up with. Well, I showed Arthur Amy signs enough Off from the house as far as we could keep 90 And from barn smells you can't wash out of plowed ground With all the rain and snow of seven years; And I don't mean just skulls of Rogers' Rangers On Moosilauke, but woman signs to man, Only bewitched so I would last him longer. 95 Up where the trees grow short, the mosses tall, I made him gather me wet snowberries On slippery rocks beside a waterfall. I made him do it for me in the dark. And he liked everything I made him do. 100 I hope if he is where he sees me now He's so far off he can't see what I've come to. You can come down from everything to nothing. All is, if I'd a-known when I was young And full of it, that this would be the end, 105 It doesn't seem as if I'd had the courage To make so free and kick up in folks' faces. I might have, but it doesn't seem as if.

## AN EMPTY THREAT

I stay; But it isn't as if There wasn't always Hudson's Bay And the fur trade,

A small skiff And a paddle blade.	5
I can just see my tent pegged, And me on the floor, Cross-legged, And a trapper looking in at the door With furs to sell.	10
His name's Joe, Alias John, And between what he doesn't know And won't tell About where Henry Hudson's gone, I can't say he's much help; But we get on.	15
The seal yelp On an ice cake. It's not men by some mistake?	20
No, There's not a soul For a windbreak Between me and the North Pole—	25
Except always John-Joe, My French Indian Esquimaux, And he's off setting traps— In one himself perhaps.	
Give a headshake Over so much bay Thrown away In snow and mist That doesn't exist,	30

I was going to say, 35 For God, man, or beast's sake, Yet does perhaps for all three. Don't ask Joe What it is to him. It's sometimes dim 40 What it is to me, Unless it be It's the old captain's dark fate Who failed to find or force a strait In its two-thousand-mile coast; 45 And his crew left him where he failed. And nothing came of all he sailed. It's to say, "You and I—" To such a ghost— "You and I 50 Off here With the dead race of the Great Auk!" And, "Better defeat almost, If seen clear, Than life's victories of doubt 55 That need endless talk-talk To make them out."

# A FOUNTAIN, A BOTTLE, A DONKEY'S EARS, AND SOME BOOKS

Old Davis owned a solid mica mountain In Dalton that would someday make his fortune. There'd been some Boston people out to see it: And experts said that deep down in the mountain The mica sheets were big as plate-glass windows. 5 He'd like to take me there and show it to me. "I'll tell you what you show me. You remember You said you knew the place where once, on Kinsman, The early Mormons made a settlement And built a stone baptismal font outdoors— 10 But Smith, or someone, called them off the mountain To go West to a worse fight with the desert. You said you'd seen the stone baptismal font. Well, take me there." "Someday I will." "Today." "Huh, that old bathtub, what is that to see? 15 Let's talk about it." "Let's go see the place." "To shut you up I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll find that fountain if it takes all summer, And both of our united strengths, to do it." "You've lost it, then?"

"Not so but I can find it. No doubt it's grown up some to woods around it. The mountain may have shifted since I saw it In eighty-five."

"As long ago as that?"

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"If I remember rightly, it had sprung A leak and emptied then. And forty years Can do a good deal to bad masonry. You won't see any Mormon swimming in it. But you have said it, and we're off to find it.

Old as I am, I'm going to let myself Be dragged by you all over everywhere——"	30
"I thought you were a guide."	
"I am a guide, And that's why I can't decently refuse you."	
We made a day of it out of the world, Ascending to descend to reascend. The old man seriously took his bearings, And spoke his doubts in every open place.	35
We came out on a look-off where we faced A cliff, and on the cliff a bottle painted, Or stained by vegetation from above, A likeness to surprise the thrilly tourist.	40
"Well, if I haven't brought you to the fountain, At least I've brought you to the famous Bottle."	
"I won't accept the substitute. It's empty."	
"So's everything."	
"I want my fountain."	
"I guess you'd find the fountain just as empty. And anyway this tells me where I am."	45
"Hadn't you long suspected where you were?"	
"You mean miles from that Mormon settlement? Look here, you treat your guide with due respect If you don't want to spend the night outdoors. I vow we must be near the place from where The two converging slides, the avalanches, On Marshall, look like donkey's ears. We may as well see that and save the day."	50
We may as well see that and save the day."	

"Don't donkey's ears suggest we shake our own?"	55
"For God's sake, aren't you fond of viewing nature? You don't like nature. All you like is books. What signify a donkey's ears and bottle, However natural? Give you your books! Well then, right here is where I show you books. Come straight down off this mountain just as fast As we can fall and keep a-bouncing on our feet. It's hell for knees unless done hell-for-leather."	60
Be ready, I thought, for almost anything.	
We struck a road I didn't recognize, But welcomed for the chance to lave my shoes In dust once more. We followed this a mile,	65
Perhaps, to where it ended at a house I didn't know was there. It was the kind To bring me to for broad-board paneling. I never saw so good a house deserted.	70
"Excuse me if I ask you in a window That happens to be broken," Davis said. "The outside doors as yet have held against us.	
I want to introduce you to the people Who used to live here. They were Robinsons.	75
You must have heard of Clara Robinson, The poetess who wrote the book of verses And had it published. It was all about	
The posies on her inner windowsill,	80
And the birds on her outer windowsill, And how she tended both, or had them tended: She never tended anything herself.	
She was 'shut in' for life. She lived her whole	
Life long in bed, and wrote her things in bed.	85

I'll show you how she had her sills extended To entertain the birds and hold the flowers. Our business first's up attic with her books."

We trod uncomfortably on crunching glass Through a house stripped of everything 90 Except, it seemed, the poetess's poems. Books, I should say!—if books are what is needed. A whole edition in a packing case That, overflowing like a horn of plenty, Or like the poetess's heart of love, 95 Had spilled them near the window, toward the light, Where driven rain had wet and swollen them. Enough to stock a village library— Unfortunately all of one kind, though. They had been brought home from some publisher 100 And taken thus into the family. Boys and bad hunters liad known what to do With stone and lead to unprotected glass: Shatter it inward on the unswept floors. How had the tender verse escaped their outrage? 105 By being invisible for what it was, Or else by some remoteness that defied them To find out what to do to hurt a poem. Yet oh! the tempting flatness of a book, To send it sailing out the attic window 110 Till it caught wind and, opening out its covers, Tried to improve on sailing like a tile By flying like a bird (silent in flight, But all the burden of its body song), 115 Only to tumble like a stricken bird, And lie in stones and bushes unretrieved. Books were not thrown irreverently about.

They simply lay where someone now and then, Having tried one, had dropped it at his feet And left it lying where it fell rejected. Here were all those the poetess's life Had been too short to sell or give away.	120
"Take one," Old Davis bade me graciously.	
"Why not take two or three?"	
"Take all you want. Good-looking books like that." He picked one fresh In virgin wrapper from deep in the box, And stroked it with a horny-handed kindness. He read in one and I read in another, Both either looking for or finding something.	125
The attic wasps went missing by like bullets.	130
I was soon satisfied for the time being.	
All the way home I kept remembering The small book in my pocket. It was there. The poetess had sighed, I knew, in heaven	
At having eased her heart of one more copy— Legitimately. My demand upon her, Though slight, was a demand. She felt the tug. In time she would be rid of all her books.	135

## I WILL SING YOU ONE-O

It was long I lay Awake that night Wishing the tower Would name the hour And tell me whether

To call it day	
(Though not yet light)	
And give up sleep.	
The snow fell deep	
With the hiss of spray;	10
Two winds would meet,	
One down one street,	
One down another,	
And fight in a smother	
Of dust and feather.	15
I could not say,	
But feared the cold	
Had checked the pace	
Of the tower clock	
By tying together	20
Its hands of gold	
Before its face.	
Then came one knock!	
A note unruffled	
Of earthly weather,	25
Though strange and muffled.	
The tower said, "One!"	
And then a steeple.	
They spoke to themselves	
And such few people	30
As winds might rouse	
From sleeping warm	
(But not unhouse).	
They left the storm	
That struck en masse	35
My window glass	
Like a beaded fur.	

In that grave One	
They spoke of the sun	
And moon and stars,	40
Saturn and Mars	
And Jupiter.	
Still more unfettered,	
They left the named	
And spoke of the lettered,	45
The sigmas and taus	
Of constellations.	
They filled their throats	
With the furthest bodies	
To which man sends his	50
Speculation,	
Beyond which God is;	
The cosmic motes	
Of yawning lenses.	
Their solemn peals	55
Were not their own:	
They spoke for the clock	
With whose vast wheels	
Theirs interlock.	
In that grave word	60
Uttered alone	
The utmost star	
Trembled and stirred,	
Though set so far	
Its whirling frenzies	65
Appear like standing	
In one self station.	
It has not ranged,	
And save for the wonder	
Of once expanding	70

To be a nova,
It has not changed
To the eye of man
On planets over,
Around, and under
It in creation
Since man began
To drag down man
And nation nation.

75

#### FRAGMENTARY BLUE

Why make so much of fragmentary blue In here and there a bird, or butterfly, Or flower, or wearing-stone, or open eye, When heaven presents in sheets the solid hue?

Since earth is earth, perhaps, not heaven (as yet)— 5 Though some savants make earth include the sky; And blue so far above us comes so high, It only gives our wish for blue a whet.

#### FIRE AND ICE

Some say the world will end in fire, Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire I hold with those who favor fire. But if it had to perish twice, I think I know enough of hate To say that for destruction ice Is also great And would suffice.

#### IN A DISUSED GRAVEYARD

The living come with grassy tread To read the gravestones on the hill; The graveyard draws the living still, But never anymore the dead.

The verses in it say and say:
"The ones who living come today
To read the stones and go away
Tomorrow dead will come to stay."

So sure of death the marbles rhyme, Yet can't help marking all the time How no one dead will seem to come. What is it men are shrinking from?

It would be easy to be clever And tell the stones: Men hate to die And have stopped dying now forever. I think they would believe the lie.

## DUST OF SNOW

The way a crow Shook down on me The dust of snow From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart A change of mood And saved some part Of a day I had rued. 5

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#### TO E.T.

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I slumbered with your poems on my breast, Spread open as I dropped them half-read through Like dove wings on a figure on a tomb, To see if in a dream they brought of you

I might not have the chance I missed in life Through some delay, and call you to your face First soldier, and then poet, and then both, Who died a soldier-poet of your race.

I meant, you meant, that nothing should remain Unsaid between us, brother, and this remained— And one thing more that was not then to say: The Victory for what it lost and gained.

You went to meet the shell's embrace of fire On Vimy Ridge; and when you fell that day The war seemed over more for you than me, But now for me than you—the other way.

How over, though, for even me who knew
The foe thrust back unsafe beyond the Rhine,
If I was not to speak of it to you
And see you pleased once more with words of mine?

## NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY

Nature's first green is gold, Her hardest hue to hold. Her early leaf's a flower; But only so an hour. Then leaf subsides to leaf. So Eden sank to grief, So dawn goes down to day. Nothing gold can stay.

#### THE RUNAWAY

Once when the snow of the year was beginning to fall, We stopped by a mountain pasture to say, "Whose colt?" A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall, The other curled at his breast. He dipped his head And snorted at us. And then he had to bolt. 5 We heard the miniature thunder where he fled, And we saw him, or thought we saw him, dim and gray, Like a shadow against the curtain of falling flakes. "I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow. He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play 10 With the little fellow at all. He's running away. I doubt if even his mother could tell him, 'Sakes, It's only weather.' He'd think she didn't know! Where is his mother? He can't be out alone." And now he comes again with clatter of stone, 15 And mounts the wall again with whited eyes And all his tail that isn't hair up straight. He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies. "Whoever it is that leaves him out so late." When other creatures have gone to stall and bin, 20 Ought to be told to come and take him in."

## THE AIM WAS SONG

Before man came to blow it right
The wind once blew itself untaught,
And did its loudest day and night
In any rough place where it caught.

Man came to tell it what was wrong: It hadn't found the place to blow; It blew too hard—the aim was song. And listen—how it ought to go!	5
He took a little in his mouth, And held it long enough for north To be converted into south, And then by measure blew it forth.	10
By measure. It was word and note, The wind the wind had meant to be— A little through the lips and throat. The aim was song—the wind could see.	15
STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING	
Whose woods these are I think I know. His house is in the village, though; He will not see me stopping here To watch his woods fill up with snow.	
My little horse must think it queer To stop without a farmhouse near Between the woods and frozen lake The darkest evening of the year.	5
He gives his harness bells a shake To ask if there is some mistake. The only other sound's the sweep Of easy wind and downy flake.	10

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,

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## FOR ONCE, THEN, SOMETHING

Others taunt me with having knelt at well-curbs
Always wrong to the light, so never seeing
Deeper down in the well than where the water
Gives me back in a shining surface picture
Me myself in the summer heaven, godlike,
Looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.
Once, when trying with chin against a well-curb,
I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,
Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,
Something more of the depths—and then I lost it.
Water came to rebuke the too clear water.
One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple
Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,
Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?
Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.

## BLUE-BUTTERFLY DAY

It is blue-butterfly day here in spring, And with these sky-flakes down in flurry on flurry There is more unmixed color on the wing Than flowers will show for days unless they hurry.

But these are flowers that fly and all but sing: And now from having ridden out desire They lie closed over in the wind and cling Where wheels have freshly sliced the April mire.

# THE ONSET

Always the same, when on a fated night At last the gathered snow lets down as white As may be in dark woods, and with a song It shall not make again all winter long Of hissing on the yet uncovered ground, I almost stumble looking up and round, As one who overtaken by the end Gives up his errand, and lets death descend Upon him where he is, with nothing done To evil, no important triumph won, More than if life had never been begun.

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Yet all the precedent is on my side:
I know that winter death has never tried
The earth but it has failed: the snow may heap
In long storms an undrifted four feet deep
As measured against maple, birch, and oak,
It cannot check the peeper's silver croak;
And I shall see the snow all go downhill
In water of a slender April rill
That flashes tail through last year's withered brake
And dead weeds, like a disappearing snake.
Nothing will be left white but here a birch,
And there a clump of houses with a church.

## TO EARTHWARD

Love at the lips was touch As sweet as I could bear; And once that seemed too much; I lived on air

That crossed me from sweet things, The flow of—was it musk From hidden grapevine springs Downhill at dusk?	5
I had the swirl and ache From sprays of honeysuckle That when they're gathered shake Dew on the knuckle.	10
I craved strong sweets, but those Seemed strong when I was young; The petal of the rose It was that stung.	15
Now no joy but lacks salt, That is not dashed with pain And weariness and fault; I crave the stain	20
Of tears, the aftermark Of almost too much love, The sweet of bitter bark And burning clove.	
When stiff and sore and scarred I take away my hand From leaning on it hard In grass and sand,	25
The hurt is not enough: I long for weight and strength To feel the earth as rough To all my length.	30

## GOOD-BY AND KEEP COLD

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This saying good-by on the edge of the dark And the cold to an orchard so young in the bark Reminds me of all that can happen to harm An orchard away at the end of the farm All winter, cut off by a hill from the house. I don't want it girdled by rabbit and mouse, I don't want it dreamily nibbled for browse By deer, and I don't want it budded by grouse. (If certain it wouldn't be idle to call I'd summon grouse, rabbit, and deer to the wall 10 And warn them away with a stick for a gun.) I don't want it stirred by the heat of the sun. (We made it secure against being, I hope, By setting it out on a northerly slope.) No orchard's the worse for the wintriest storm: But one thing about it, it mustn't get warm. "How often already you've had to be told, Keep cold, young orchard. Good-by and keep cold. Dread fifty above more than fifty below." I have to be gone for a season or so. My business awhile is with different trees, Less carefully nurtured, less fruitful than these, And such as is done to their wood with an ax-Maples and birches and tamaracks. I wish I could promise to lie in the night And think of an orchard's arboreal plight When slowly (and nobody comes with a light) Its heart sinks lower under the sod. But something has to be left to God.

# TWO LOOK AT TWO

Love and forgetting might have carried them	
A little further up the mountainside	
With night so near, but not much further up.	
They must have halted soon in any case	
With thoughts of the path back, how rough it was	5
With rock and washout, and unsafe in darkness;	
When they were halted by a tumbled wall	
With barbed-wire binding. They stood facing this,	
Spending what onward impulse they still had	
In one last look the way they must not go,	10
On up the failing path, where, if a stone	
Or earthslide moved at night, it moved itself;	
No footstep moved it. "This is all," they sighed,	
"Good-night to woods." But not so; there was more.	
A doe from round a spruce stood looking at them	15
Across the wall, as near the wall as they.	
She saw them in their field, they her in hers.	
The difficulty of seeing what stood still,	
Like some up-ended boulder split in two,	
Was in her clouded eyes: they saw no fear there.	20
She seemed to think that, two thus, they were safe.	
Then, as if they were something that, though strange,	
She could not trouble her mind with too long,	
She sighed and passed unscared along the wall.	
"This, then, is all. What more is there to ask?"	25
But no, not yet. A snort to bid them wait.	
A buck from round the spruce stood looking at them	
Across the wall, as near the wall as they.	
This was an antlered buck of lusty nostril,	
Not the same doe come back into her place.	30
He viewed them quizzically with jerks of head,	

As if to ask, "Why don't you make some motion? Or give some sign of life? Because you can't. I doubt if you're as living as you look." Thus till he had them almost feeling dared To stretch a proffering hand—and a spell-breaking. Then he too passed unscared along the wall. Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from. "This must be all." It was all. Still they stood, A great wave from it going over them, As if the earth in one unlooked-for favor Had made them certain earth returned their love.

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## NOT TO KEEP

They sent him back to her. The letter came
Saying. . . . And she could have him. And before
She could be sure there was no hidden ill
Under the formal writing, he was there,
Living. They gave him back to her alive—
How else? They are not known to send the dead.—
And not disfigured visibly. His face?
His hands? She had to look, to look and ask,
"What is it, dear?" And she had given all
And still she had all—they had—they the lucky!
Wasn't she glad now? Everything seemed won,
And all the rest for them permissible ease.
She had to ask, "What was it, dear?"

"Enough, Yet not enough. A bullet through and through, High in the breast. Nothing but what good care And medicine and rest, and you a week, Can cure me of to go again." The same Grim giving to do over for them both.

She dared no more than ask him with her eyes

How was it with him for a second trial.

And with his eyes he asked her not to ask.

They had given him back to her, but not to keep.

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## A BROOK IN THE CITY

The farmhouse lingers, though averse to square With the new city street it has to wear A number in. But what about the brook That held the house as in an elbow-crook? I ask as one who knew the brook, its strength 5 And impulse, having dipped a finger length And made it leap my knuckle, having tossed A flower to try its currents where they crossed. The meadow grass could be cemented down From growing under pavements of a town; 10 The apple trees be sent to hearthstone flame. Is water wood to serve a brook the same? How else dispose of an immortal force No longer needed? Staunch it at its source With cinder loads dumped down? The brook was thrown Deep in a sewer dungeon under stone In fetid darkness still to live and run— And all for nothing it had ever done, Except forget to go in fear perhaps. No one would know except for ancient maps 20 That such a brook ran water. But I wonder If from its being kept forever under, The thoughts may not have risen that so keep This new-built city from both work and sleep.

#### THE KITCHEN CHIMNEY

Builder, in building the little house, In every way you may please yourself; But please please me in the kitchen chimney: Don't build me a chimney upon a shelf.

However far you must go for bricks, Whatever they cost apiece or a pound, Buy me enough for a full-length chimney, And build the chimney clear from the ground.

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It's not that I'm greatly afraid of fire, But I never heard of a house that throve (And I know of one that didn't thrive) Where the chimney started above the stove.

And I dread the ominous stain of tar That there always is on the papered walls, And the smell of fire drowned in rain That there always is when the chimney's false.

A shelf's for a clock or vase or picture, But I don't see why it should have to bear A chimney that only would serve to remind me Of castles I used to build in air.

# LOOKING FOR A SUNSET BIRD IN WINTER

The west was getting out of gold, The breath of air had died of cold, When shoeing home across the white, I thought I saw a bird alight.

In summer when I passed the place, I had to stop and lift my face; A bird with an angelic gift Was singing in it sweet and swift.	5
No bird was singing in it now. A single leaf was on a bough, And that was all there was to see In going twice around the tree.	10
From my advantage on a hill I judged that such a crystal chill Was only adding frost to snow As gilt to gold that wouldn't show.	15
A brush had left a crooked stroke Of what was either cloud or smoke From north to south across the blue; A piercing little star was through.	20
A BOUNDLESS MOMENT	
He halted in the wind, and—what was that Far in the maples, pale, but not a ghost? He stood there bringing March against his thought, And yet too ready to believe the most.	
"Oh, that's the Paradise-in-Bloom," I said; And truly it was fair enough for flowers Had we but in us to assume in March Such white luxuriance of May for ours.	5
We stood a moment so, in a strange world, Myself as one his own pretense deceives;	10

And then I said the truth (and we moved on). A young beech clinging to its last year's leaves.

#### EVENING IN A SUGAR ORCHARD

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From where I lingered in a lull in March Outside the sugarhouse one night for choice, I called the fireman with a careful voice And bade him leave the pan and stoke the arch: "O fireman, give the fire another stoke, And send more sparks up chimney with the smoke." I thought a few might tangle, as they did, Among bare maple boughs, and in the rare Hill atmosphere not cease to glow, And so be added to the moon up there. The moon, though slight, was moon enough to show On every tree a bucket with a lid, And on black ground a bear-skin rug of snow. The sparks made no attempt to be the moon. They were content to figure in the trees As Leo, Orion, and the Pleiades. And that was what the boughs were full of soon.

## GATHERING LEAVES

Spades take up leaves No better than spoons, And bags full of leaves Are light as balloons.

I make a great noise Of rustling all day Like rabbit and deer Running away.

But the mountains I raise Elude my embrace, Flowing over my arms And into my face.

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I may load and unload Again and again Till I fill the whole shed, And what have I then?

Next to nothing for weight; And since they grew duller From contact with earth, Next to nothing for color.

Next to nothing for use. But a crop is a crop, And who's to say where The harvest shall stop?

#### THE VALLEY'S SINGING DAY

The sound of the closing outside door was all. You made no sound in the grass with your footfall, As far as you went from the door, which was not far; But you had awakened under the morning star The first songbird that awakened all the rest. He could have slept but a moment more at best. Already determined dawn began to lay In place across a cloud the slender ray For prying beneath and forcing the lids of sight,

And loosing the pent-up music of overnight.	10
But dawn was not to begin their "pearly"	
(By which they mean the rain is pearls so early,	
Before it changes to diamonds in the sun),	
Neither was song that day to be self-begun.	
You had begun it, and if there needed proof—	15
I was asleep still under the dripping roof,	
My window curtain hung over the sill to wet;	
But I should awake to confirm your story yet;	
I should be willing to say and help you say	
That once you had opened the valley's singing day.	20

#### **MISGIVING**

All crying, "We will go with you, O Wind!"
The foliage follow him, leaf and stem;
But a sleep oppresses them as they go,
And they end by bidding him stay with them.

Since ever they flung abroad in spring
The leaves had promised themselves this flight,
Who now would fain seek sheltering wall,
Or thicket, or hollow place for the night.

And now they answer his summoning blast With an ever vaguer and vaguer stir, Or at utmost a little reluctant whirl That drops them no further than where they were.

I only hope that when I am free,
As they are free, to go in quest
Of the knowledge beyond the bounds of life
It may not seem better to me to rest.

## A HILLSIDE THAW

To think to know the country and not know The hillside on the day the sun lets go Ten million silver lizards out of snow! As often as I've seen it done before I can't pretend to tell the way it's done. 5 It looks as if some magic of the sun Lifted the rug that bred them on the floor And the light breaking on them made them run. But if I thought to stop the wet stampede, And caught one silver lizard by the tail, 10 And put my foot on one without avail, And threw myself wet-elbowed and wet-kneed In front of twenty others' wriggling speed-In the confusion of them all aglitter, And birds that joined in the excited fun 15 By doubling and redoubling song and twitter— I have no doubt I'd end by holding none. It takes the moon for this. The sun's a wizard By all I tell; but so's the moon a witch. From the high west she makes a gentle cast 20 And suddenly, without a jerk or twitch, She has her spell on every single lizard. I fancied when I looked at six o'clock The swarm still ran and scuttled just as fast. The moon was waiting for her chill effect. 25 I looked at nine: the swarm was turned to rock In every lifelike posture of the swarm. Transfixed on mountain slopes almost erect. Across each other and side by side they lay. The spell that so could hold them as they were 30 Was wrought through trees without a breath of storm To make a leaf, if there had been one, stir. It was the moon's: she held them until day, One lizard at the end of every ray. The thought of my attempting such a stay!

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#### **PLOWMEN**

A plow, they say, to plow the snow. They cannot mean to plant it, no—Unless in bitterness to mock At having cultivated rock.

#### ON A TREE FALLEN ACROSS THE ROAD

(To hear us talk)

The tree the tempest with a crash of wood Throws down in front of us is not to bar Our passage to our journey's end for good, But just to ask us who we think we are

Insisting always on our own way so. She likes to halt us in our runner tracks, And make us get down in a foot of snow Debating what to do without an ax.

And yet she knows obstruction is in vain: We will not be put off the final goal We have it hidden in us to attain, Not though we have to seize earth by the pole

And, tired of aimless circling in one place, Steer straight off after something into space.

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### OUR SINGING STRENGTH

It snowed in spring on earth so dry and warm	
The flakes could find no landing place to form.	
Hordes spent themselves to make it wet and cold,	
And still they failed of any lasting hold.	
They made no white impression on the black.	5
They disappeared as if earth sent them back.	
Not till from separate flakes they changed at night	
To almost strips and tapes of ragged white	
Did grass and garden ground confess it snowed,	
And all go back to winter but the road.	10
Next day the scene was piled and puffed and dead.	
The grass lay flattened under one great tread.	
Borne down until the end almost took root,	
The rangey bough anticipated fruit	
With snowballs cupped in every opening bud.	15
The road alone maintained itself in mud,	
Whatever its secret was of greater heat	
From inward fires or brush of passing feet.	
In spring more mortal singers than belong	
To any one place cover us with song.	20
Thrush, bluebird, blackbird, sparrow, and robin throng;	
Some to go further north to Hudson's Bay,	
Some that have come too far north back away,	
Really a very few to build and stay.	
Now was seen how these liked belated snow.	2
The fields had nowhere left for them to go;	
They'd soon exhausted all there was in flying;	
The trees they'd had enough of with once trying	
And setting off their heavy powder load.	
They could find nothing open but the road.	3

So there they let their lives be narrowed in By thousands the bad weather made akin. The road became a channel running flocks Of glossy birds like ripples over rocks. I drove them underfoot in bits of flight 35 That kept the ground, almost disputing right Of way with me from apathy of wing, A talking twitter all they had to sing. A few I must have driven to despair Made quick asides, but having done in air 40 A whir among white branches great and small, As in some too much carven marble hall Where one false wing beat would have brought down all, Came tamely back in front of me, the Drover, To suffer the same driven nightmare over. 45 One such storm in a lifetime couldn't teach them That back behind pursuit it couldn't reach them; None flew behind me to be left alone.

Well, something for a snowstorm to have shown
The country's singing strength thus brought together,
That though repressed and moody with the weather
Was nonetheless there ready to be freed
And sing the wild flowers up from root and seed.

#### THE LOCKLESS DOOR

It went many years, But at last came a knock, And I thought of the door With no lock to lock.

I blew out the light, I tiptoed the floor, 5

And raised both hands In prayer to the door. But the knock came again. My window was wide; 10 I climbed on the sill And descended outside. Back over the sill I bade a "Come in" To whatever the knock 15 At the door may have been. So at a knock I emptied my cage To hide in the world And alter with age. 20 THE NEED OF BEING VERSED IN COUNTRY THINGS The house had gone to bring again To the midnight sky a sunset glow. Now the chimney was all of the house that stood, Like a pistil after the petals go. The barn opposed across the way, 5 That would have joined the house in flame Had it been the will of the wind, was left To bear forsaken the place's name. No more it opened with all one end

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For teams that came by the stony road

To drum on the floor with scurrying hoofs

And brush the mow with the summer load.

The birds that came to it through the air At broken windows flew out and in, Their murmur more like the sigh we sigh From too much dwelling on what has been.

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Yet for them the lilac renewed its leaf, And the aged elm, though touched with fire; And the dry pump flung up an awkward arm; And the fence post carried a strand of wire.

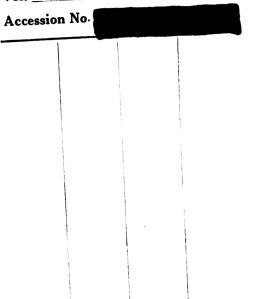
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For them there was really nothing sad. But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept, One had to be versed in country things Not to believe the phoebes wept.

# West-Running Brook : 1928 :

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#### SPRING POOLS

These pools that, though in forests, still reflect
The total sky almost without defect,
And like the flowers beside them, chill and shiver,
Will like the flowers beside them soon be gone,
And yet not out by any brook or river,
But up by roots to bring dark foliage on.

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The trees that have it in their pent-up buds
To darken nature and be summer woods—
Let them think twice before they use their powers
To blot out and drink up and sweep away
These flowery waters and these watery flowers
From snow that melted only yesterday.

#### THE FREEDOM OF THE MOON

I've tried the new moon tilted in the air Above a hazy tree-and-farmhouse cluster As you might try a jewel in your hair. I've tried it fine with little breadth of luster, Alone, or in one ornament combining With one first-water star almost as shining.

I put it shining anywhere I please. By walking slowly on some evening later I've pulled it from a crate of crooked trees, And brought it over glossy water, greater, And dropped it in, and seen the image wallow, The color run, all sorts of wonder follow.

#### THE ROSE FAMILY

The rose is a rose,
And was always a rose.
But the theory now goes
That the apple's a rose,
And the pear is, and so's
The plum, I suppose.
The dear only knows
What will next prove a rose.
You, of course, are a rose—
But were always a rose.

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FIREFLIES IN THE GARDEN

Here come real stars to fill the upper skies, And here on earth come emulating flies That, though they never equal stars in size (And they were never really stars at heart), Achieve at times a very starlike start. Only, of course, they can't sustain the part.

#### **ATMOSPHERE**

Inscription for a garden wall

Winds blow the open grassy places bleak; But where this old wall burns a sunny cheek, They eddy over it too toppling weak To blow the earth or anything self-clear; Moisture and color and odor thicken here. The hours of daylight gather atmosphere.

#### **DEVOTION**

The heart can think of no devotion Greater than being shore to the ocean— Holding the curve of one position, Counting an endless repetition.

#### ON GOING UNNOTICED

As vain to raise a voice as a sigh In the tumult of free leaves on high. What are you, in the shadow of trees Engaged up there with the light and breeze?

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Less than the coralroot, you know, That is content with the daylight low, And has no leaves at all of its own; Whose spotted flowers hang meanly down.

You grasp the bark by a rugged pleat, And look up small from the forest's feet. The only leaf it drops goes wide, Your name not written on either side.

You linger your little hour and are gone, And still the woods sweep leafily on, Not even missing the coralroot flower You took as a trophy of the hour.

#### THE COCOON

As far as I can see, this autumn haze That spreading in the evening air both ways Makes the new moon look anything but new And pours the elm-tree meadow full of blue. Is all the smoke from one poor house alone. 5 With but one chimney it can call its own; So close it will not light an early light, Keeping its life so close and out of sight No one for hours has set a foot outdoors So much as to take care of evening chores. 10 The inmates may be lonely womenfolk. I want to tell them that with all this smoke They prudently are spinning their cocoon And anchoring it to an earth and moon From which no winter gale can hope to blow it— 15 Spinning their own cocoon did they but know it.

#### A PASSING GLIMPSE

To Ridgely Torrence on last looking into his "Hesperides"

I often see flowers from a passing car That are gone before I can tell what they are.

I want to get out of the train and go back To see what they were beside the track.

I name all the flowers I am sure they weren't: Not fireweed loving where woods have burnt—

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Not bluebells gracing a tunnel mouth— Not lupine living on sand and drouth.

Was something brushed across my mind That no one on earth will ever find?

Heaven gives its glimpses only to those Not in position to look too close.

#### A PECK OF GOLD

Dust always blowing about the town, Except when sea fog laid it down, And I was one of the children told Some of the blowing dust was gold.

All the dust the wind blew high Appeared like gold in the sunset sky, But I was one of the children told Some of the dust was really gold. 5

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Such was life in the Golden Gate: Gold dusted all we drank and ate, And I was one of the children told, "We all must eat our peck of gold."

#### ACCEPTANCE

When the spent sun throws up its rays on cloud And goes down burning into the gulf below, No voice in nature is heard to cry aloud At what has happened. Birds, at least, must know It is the change to darkness in the sky. Murmuring something quiet in her breast, One bird begins to close a faded eye; Or overtaken too far from his nest, Hurrying low above the grove, some waif Swoops just in time to his remembered tree. At most he thinks or twitters softly, "Safe! Now let the night be dark for all of me. Let the night be too dark for me to see Into the future. Let what will be, be."

#### ONCE BY THE PACIFIC

The shattered water made a misty din.
Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
That water never did to land before.
The clouds were low and hairy in the skies,
Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.
You could not tell, and yet it looked as if
The shore was lucky in being backed by cliff,
The cliff in being backed by continent;
It looked as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
Someone had better be prepared for rage.
There would be more than ocean-water broken
Before God's last Put out the Light was spoken.

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#### **LODGED**

The rain to the wind said,
"You push and I'll pelt."
They so smote the garden bed
That the flowers actually knelt,
And lay lodged—though not dead.
I know how the flowers felt.

#### A MINOR BIRD

I have wished a bird would fly away, And not sing by my house all day; Have clapped my hands at him from the door When it seemed as if I could bear no more. The fault must partly have been in me. The bird was not to blame for his key.

And of course there must be something wrong In wanting to silence any song.

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#### BEREFT

Where had I heard this wind before Change like this to a deeper roar? What would it take my standing there for, Holding open a restive door, Looking downhill to a frothy shore? Summer was past and day was past. Somber clouds in the west were massed. Out in the porch's sagging floor Leaves got up in a coil and hissed, Blindly struck at my knee and missed. Something sinister in the tone Told me my secret must be known: Word I was in the house alone Somehow must have gotten abroad, Word I was in my life alone, Word I had no one left but God.

#### TREE AT MY WINDOW

Tree at my window, window tree, My sash is lowered when night comes on; But let there never be curtain drawn Between you and me.

Vague dream-head lifted out of the ground, And thing next most diffuse to cloud, Not all your light tongues talking aloud Could be profound.

But, tree, I have seen you taken and tossed, And if you have seen me when I slept, You have seen me when I was taken and swept And all but lost.

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That day she put our heads together, Fate had her imagination about her, Your head so much concerned with outer, Mine with inner, weather.

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#### THE PEACEFUL SHEPHERD

If heaven were to do again, And on the pasture bars I leaned to line the figures in Between the dotted stars,

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I should be tempted to forget, I fear, the Crown of Rule, The Scales of Trade, the Cross of Faith, As hardly worth renewal.

For these have governed in our lives, And see how men have warred. The Cross, the Crown, the Scales may all As well have been the Sword.

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#### THE THATCH

Out alone in the winter rain, Intent on giving and taking pain.

But never was I far out of sight	
Of a certain upper-window light.	
The light was what it was all about:	5
I would not go in till the light went out;	
It would not go out till I came in.	
Well, we should see which one would win,	
We should see which one would be first to yield.	
The world was a black invisible field.	10
The rain by rights was snow for cold.	
The wind was another layer of mold.	
But the strangest thing: in the thick old thatch,	
Where summer birds had been given hatch,	
Had fed in chorus, and lived to fledge,	15
Some still were living in hermitage.	
And as I passed along the eaves	
So low I brushed the straw with my sleeves,	
I flushed birds out of hole after hole,	
Into the darkness. It grieved my soul,	20
It started a grief within a grief,	
To think their case was beyond relief—	
They could not go flying about in search	
Of their nest again, nor find a perch.	
They must brood where they fell in mulch and mire,	25
Trusting feathers and inward fire	
Till daylight made it safe for a flyer.	
My greater grief was by so much reduced	
As I thought of them without nest or roost.	
That was how that grief started to melt.	30
They tell me the cottage where we dwelt,	
Its wind-torn thatch goes now unmended;	
Its life of hundreds of years has ended	
By letting the rain I knew outdoors	
In onto the upper chamber floors.	35

#### A WINTER EDEN

A winter garden in an alder swamp, Where conies now come out to sun and romp, As near a paradise as it can be And not melt snow or start a dormant tree.

It lifts existence on a plane of snow One level higher than the earth below, One level nearer heaven overhead, And last year's berries shining scarlet red.

It lifts a gaunt luxuriating beast Where he can stretch and hold his highest feast On some wild apple-tree's young tender bark, What well may prove the year's high girdle mark. 5

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So near to paradise all pairing ends: Here loveless birds now flock as winter friends, Content with bud-inspecting. They presume To say which buds are leaf and which are bloom.

A feather-hammer gives a double knock.
This Eden day is done at two o'clock.
An hour of winter day might seem too short
To make it worth life's while to wake and sport.

#### THE FLOOD

Blood has been harder to dam back than water. Just when we think we have it impounded safe Behind new barrier walls (and let it chafe!), It breaks away in some new kind of slaughter. We choose to say it is let loose by the devil; But power of blood itself releases blood.

It goes by might of being such a flood
Held high at so unnatural a level.
It will have outlet, brave and not so brave.
Weapons of war and implements of peace
Are but the points at which it finds release.
And now it is once more the tidal wave
That when it has swept by, leaves summits stained.
Oh, blood will out. It cannot be contained.

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#### ACQUAINTED WITH THE NIGHT

I have been one acquainted with the night. I have walked out in rain—and back in rain. I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane. I have passed by the watchman on his beat And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet When far away an interrupted cry Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-by; And further still at an unearthly height One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right. I have been one acquainted with the night.

#### THE LOVELY SHALL BE CHOOSERS

The Voice said, "Hurl her down!" The Voices, "How far down?"

"Seven levels of the world."	
"How much time have we?"	
"Take twenty years.  She would refuse love safe with wealth and honor!  The lovely shall be choosers, shall they?  Then let them choose!"	5
"Then we shall let her choose?"	
"Yes, let her choose. Take up the task beyond her choosing."	10
Invisible hands crowded on her shoulder In readiness to weigh upon her. But she stood straight still, In broad round earrings, gold and jet with pearls, And broad round suchlike brooch, Her cheeks high-colored, Proud and the pride of friends.	15
The Voice asked, "You can let her choose?"	
"Yes, we can let her and still triumph."	20
"Do it by joys, and leave her always blameless.  Be her first joy her wedding,  That though a wedding,	
Is yet—well, something they know, he and she.  And after that her next joy	25
That though she grieves, her grief is secret: Those friends know nothing of her grief to make it sham Her third joy that though now they cannot help but know They move in pleasure too far off	w,
To think much or much care.  Give her a child at either knee for fourth joy	30

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#### CANIS MAJOR

The great Overdog, That heavenly beast With a star in one eye, Gives a leap in the east.

He dance's upright All the way to the west And never once drops On his forefeet to rest.

I'm a poor underdog, But tonight I will bark With the great Overdog That romps through the dark.

#### A SOLDIER

He is that fallen lance that lies as hurled,
That lies unlifted now, come dew, come rust,
But still lies pointed as it plowed the dust.
If we who sight along it round the world,
See nothing worthy to have been its mark,
It is because like men we look too near,
Forgetting that as fitted to the sphere,
Our missiles always make too short an arc.
They fall, they rip the grass, they intersect
The curve of earth, and striking, break their own;
They make us cringe for metal-point on stone.
But this we know, the obstacle that checked

And tripped the body, shot the spirit on Further than target ever showed or shone.

#### **IMMIGRANTS**

No ship of all that under sail or steam Have gathered people to us more and more But, Pilgrim-manned, the *Mayflower* in a dream Has been her anxious convoy in to shore.

#### HANNIBAL

Was there ever a cause too lost, Ever a cause that was lost too long, Or that showed with the lapse of time too vain For the generous tears of youth and song?

#### THE FLOWER BOAT

The fisherman's swapping a yarn for a yarn Under the hand of the village barber, And here in the angle of house and barn His deep-sea dory has found a harbor.

At anchor she rides the sunny sod,
As full to the gunnel of flowers growing
As ever she turned her home with cod
From Georges Bank when winds were blowing.

And I judge from that Elysian freight That all they ask is rougher weather, And dory and master will sail by fate To seek for the Happy Isles together.

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#### THE TIMES TABLE

More than halfway up the pass Was a spring with a broken drinking glass, And whether the farmer drank or not His mare was sure to observe the spot By cramping the wheel on a water bar, Turning her forehead with a star, And straining her ribs for a monster sigh; To which the farmer would make reply, "A sigh for every so many breath, And for every so many sigh a death. That's what I always tell my wife Is the multiplication table of life." The saying may be ever so true; But it's just the kind of a thing that you Nor I nor nobody else may say, Unless our purpose is doing harm, And then I know of no better way To close a road, abandon a farm, Reduce the births of the human race, And bring back nature in people's place.

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#### THE INVESTMENT

Over back where they speak of life as staying ("You couldn't call it living, for it ain't"),
There was an old, old house renewed with paint,
And in it a piano loudly playing.

Out in the plowed ground in the cold a digger, Among unearthed potatoes standing still, Was counting winter dinners, one a hill, With half an ear to the piano's vigor. All that piano and new paint back there, Was it some money suddenly come into? Or some extravagance young love had been to? Or old love on an impulse not to care—

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Not to sink under being man and wife, But get some color and music out of life?

#### THE LAST MOWING

There's a place called Faraway Meadow We never shall mow in again, Or such is the talk at the farmhouse: The meadow is finished with men. Then now is the chance for the flowers That can't stand mowers and plowers. It must be now, though, in season Before the not mowing brings trees on, Before trees, seeing the opening, March into a shadowy claim. The trees are all I'm afraid of, That flowers can't bloom in the shade of; It's no more men I'm afraid of: The meadow is done with the tame. The place for the moment is ours For you, O tumultuous flowers, To go to waste and go wild in, All shapes and colors of flowers, I needn't call you by name.

#### THE BIRTHPLACE

Here further up the mountain slope Than there was ever any hope, My father built, enclosed a spring,
Strung chains of wall round everything,
Subdued the growth of earth to grass,
And brought our various lives to pass.
A dozen girls and boys we were.
The mountain seemed to like the stir,
And made of us a little while—
With always something in her smile.
Today she wouldn't know our name.
(No girl's, of course, has stayed the same.)
The mountain pushed us off her knees.
And now her lap is full of trees.

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#### THE DOOR IN THE DARK

In going from room to room in the dark I reached out blindly to save my face, But neglected, however lightly, to lace My fingers and close my arms in an arc. A slim door got in past my guard, And hit me a blow in the head so hard I had my native simile jarred. So people and things don't pair anymore With what they used to pair with before.

#### DUST IN THE EYES

If, as they say, some dust thrown in my eyes Will keep my talk from getting overwise, I'm not the one for putting off the proof. Let it be overwhelming, off a roof And round a corner, blizzard snow for dust, And blind me to a standstill if it must.

#### SITTING BY A BUSH IN BROAD SUNLIGHT

When I spread out my hand here today, I catch no more than a ray
To feel of between thumb and fingers;
No lasting effect of it lingers.

There was one time and only the one When dust really took in the sun; And from that one intake of fire All creatures still warmly suspire.

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And if men have watched a long time And never seen sun-smitten slime Again come to life and crawl off, We must not be too ready to scoff.

God once declared He was true And then took the veil and withdrew, And remember how final a hush Then descended of old on the bush.

God once spoke to people by name. The sun once imparted its flame. One impulse persists as our breath; The other persists as our faith.

#### THE ARMFUL

For every parcel I stoop down to seize
I lose some other off my arms and knees,
And the whole pile is slipping, bottles, buns—
Extremes too hard to comprehend at once,
Yet nothing I should care to leave behind.

With all I have to hold with, hand and mind And heart, if need be, I will do my best To keep their building balanced at my breast. I crouch down to prevent them as they fall; Then sit down in the middle of them all. I had to drop the armful in the road And try to stack them in a better load.

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#### WHAT FIFTY SAID

When I was young my teachers were the old. I gave up fire for form till I was cold. I suffered like a metal being cast. I went to school to age to learn the past.

Now I am old my teachers are the young. What can't be molded must be cracked and sprung. I strain at lessons fit to start a suture. I go to school to youth to learn the future.

#### RIDERS

The surest thing there is is we are riders, And though none too successful at it, guiders, Through everything presented, land and tide And now the very air, of what we ride.

What is this talked-of mystery of birth
But being mounted bareback on the earth?
We can just see the infant up astride,
His small fist buried in the bushy hide.

There is our wildest mount—a headless horse.

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# ON LOOKING UP BY CHANCE AT THE CONSTELLATIONS

You'll wait a long, long time for anything much To happen in heaven beyond the floats of cloud And the Northern Lights that run like tingling nerves. The sun and moon get crossed, but they never touch, Nor strike out fire from each other, nor crash out loud. 5 The planets seem to interfere in their curves, But nothing ever happens, no harm is done. We may as well go patiently on with our life, And look elsewhere than to stars and moon and sun For the shocks and changes we need to keep us sane. 10 It is true the longest drouth will end in rain, The longest peace in China will end in strife. Still it wouldn't reward the watcher to stay awake In hopes of seeing the calm of heaven break On his particular time and personal sight. 15 That calm seems certainly safe to last tonight.

#### THE BEAR

The bear puts both arms around the tree above her And draws it down as if it were a lover And its chokecherries lips to kiss good-by, Then lets it snap back upright in the sky. Her next step rocks a boulder on the wall (She's making her cross-country in the fall).

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Her great weight creaks the barbed wire in its staples As she flings over and off down through the maples, Leaving on one wire tooth a lock of hair. Such is the uncaged progress of the bear. 10 The world has room to make a bear feel free; The universe seems cramped to you and me. Man acts more like the poor bear in a cage, That all day fights a nervous inward rage, His mood rejecting all his mind suggests. 15 He paces back and forth and never rests The toenail click and shuffle of his feet, The telescope at one end of his beat, And at the other end the microscope, Two instruments of nearly equal hope, 20 And in conjunction giving quite a spread. Or if he rests from scientific tread, 'Tis only to sit back and sway his head Through ninety-odd degrees of arc, it seems, Between two metaphysical extremes. 25 He sits back on his fundamental butt With lifted snout and eyes (if any) shut (He almost looks religious but he's not), And back and forth he sways from cheek to cheek, At one extreme agreeing with one Greek, 30 At the other agreeing with another Greek, Which may be thought, but only so to speak. A baggy figure, equally pathetic When sedentary and when peripatetic.

#### THE EGG AND THE MACHINE

He gave the solid rail a hateful kick. From far away there came an answering tick, And then another tick. He knew the code: His hate had roused an engine up the road. He wished when he had had the track alone He had attacked it with a club or stone And bent some rail wide open like a switch, So as to wreck the engine in the ditch. Too late though, now, he had himself to thank. Its click was rising to a nearer clank. Here it came breasting like a horse in skirts. (He stood well back for fear of scalding squirts.) Then for a moment all there was was size, Confusion, and a roar that drowned the cries He raised against the gods in the machine. Then once again the sandbank lay serene. The traveler's eye picked up a turtle trail, Between the dotted feet a streak of tail, And followed it to where he made out vague But certain signs of buried turtle's egg; And probing with one finger not too rough, He found suspicious sand, and sure enough, The pocket of a little turtle mine. If there was one egg in it there were nine, Torpedo-like, with shell of gritty leather, All packed in sand to wait the trump together. "You'd better not disturb me anymore," He told the distance, "I am armed for war. The next machine that has the power to pass Will get this plasm in its goggle glass."

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#### A LONE STRIKER

The swinging mill bell changed its rate To tolling like the count of fate, And though at that the tardy ran, One failed to make the closing gate. There was a law of God or man 5 That on the one who came too late The gate for half an hour be locked, His time be lost, his pittance docked. He stood rebuked and unemployed. The straining mill began to shake. 10 The mill, though many-many-eyed, Had eyes inscrutably opaque; So that he couldn't look inside To see if some forlorn machine Was standing idle for his sake. 15 (He couldn't hope its heart would break.) And yet he thought he saw the scene: The air was full of dust of wool. A thousand yarns were under pull, But pull so slow, with such a twist, 20 All day from spool to lesser spool, It seldom overtaxed their strength; They safely grew in slender length. And if one broke by any chance, The spinner saw it at a glance. 25 The spinner still was there to spin. That's where the human still came in. Her deft hand showed with finger rings

Among the harplike spread of strings. She caught the pieces end to end And, with a touch that never missed, Not so much tied as made them blend. Man's ingenuity was good. He saw it plainly where he stood, Yet found it easy to resist.

He knew another place, a wood,
And in it, tall as trees, were cliffs;
And if he stood on one of these,
"Twould be among the tops of trees,
Their upper branches round him wreathing,
Their breathing mingled with his breathing.
If—if he stood! Enough of ifs!
He knew a path that wanted walking;
He knew a spring that wanted drinking;
A thought that wanted further thinking;
A love that wanted re-renewing.
Nor was this just a way of talking
To save him the expense of doing.
With him it boded action, deed.

The factory was very fine;
He wished it all the modern speed.
Yet, after all, 'twas not divine,
That is to say, 'twas not a church.
He never would assume that he'd
Be any institution's need.
But he said then and still would say,
If there should ever come a day
When industry seemed like to die
Because he left it in the lurch,

Or even merely seemed to pine For want of his approval, why, Come get him—they knew where to search.

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#### TWO TRAMPS IN MUD TIME

Out of the mud two strangers came
And caught me splitting wood in the yard.
And one of them put me off my aim
By hailing cheerily "Hit them hard!"
I knew pretty well why he dropped behind
And let the other go on a way.
I knew pretty well what he had in mind:
He wanted to take my job for pay.

Good blocks of oak it was I split,
As large around as the chopping block;
And every piece I squarely hit
Fell splinterless as a cloven rock.
The blows that a life of self-control
Spares to strike for the common good,
That day, giving a loose to my soul,
I spent on the unimportant wood.

The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
You know how it is with an April day
When the sun is out and the wind is still,
You're one month on in the middle of May.
But if you so much as dare to speak,
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,
A wind comes off a frozen peak,
And you're two months back in the middle of March.

A bluebird comes tenderly up to alight 25

And turns to the wind to unruffle a plume, His song so pitched as not to excite A single flower as yet to bloom. It is snowing a flake: and he half knew Winter was only playing possum. 30 Except in color he isn't blue, But he wouldn't advise a thing to blossom. The water for which we may have to look In summertime with a witching wand, In every wheelrut's now a brook, 35 In every print of a hoof a pond. Be glad of water, but don't forget The lurking frost in the earth beneath That will steal forth after the sun is set And show on the water its crystal teeth. 40 The time when most I loved my task These two must make me love it more By coming with what they came to ask. You'd think I never had felt before The weight of an ax-head poised aloft, 45 The grip on earth of outspread feet, The life of muscles rocking soft And smooth and moist in vernal heat. Out of the woods two hulking tramps (From sleeping God knows where last night, 50 But not long since in the lumber camps). They thought all chopping was theirs of right. Men of the woods and lumberjacks, They judged me by their appropriate tool. 55 Except as a fellow handled an ax They had no way of knowing a fool.

Nothing on either side was said.

They knew they had but to stay their stay
And all their logic would fill my head:
As that I had no right to play

With what was another man's work for gain.
My right might be love but theirs was need.
And where the two exist in twain
Theirs was the better right—agreed.

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.

Only where love and need are one, And the work is play for mortal stakes, Is the deed ever really done For Heaven and the future's sakes.

#### THE WHITE-TAILED HORNET

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The white-tailed hornet lives in a balloon
That floats against the ceiling of the woodshed.
The exit he comes out at like a bullet
Is like the pupil of a pointed gun.
And having power to change his aim in flight,
He comes out more unerring than a bullet.
Verse could be written on the certainty
With which he penetrates my best defense
Of whirling hands and arms about the head
To stab me in the sneeze-nerve of a nostril.
Such is the instinct of it I allow.
Yet how about the insect certainty
That in the neighborhood of home and children

Is such an execrable judge of motives	
As not to recognize in me the exception	15
I like to think I am in everything—	1.
One who would never hang above a bookcase	
His Japanese crepe-paper globe for trophy?	
He stung me first and stung me afterward.	
He rolled me off the field head over heels	20
And would not listen to my explanations.	20
That's when I went as visitor to his house.	
As visitor at my house he is better.	
Hawking for flies about the kitchen door,	
In at one door perhaps and out another,	25
Trust him then not to put you in the wrong.	
He won't misunderstand your freest movements.	
Let him light on your skin unless you mind	
So many prickly grappling feet at once.	
He's after the domesticated fly	30
To feed his thumping grubs as big as he is.	
Here he is at his best, but even here—	
I watched him where he swooped, he pounced, he structure	ck;
But what he found he had was just a nailhead.	
He struck a second time. Another nailhead.	35
"Those are just nailheads. Those are fastened down."	
Then disconcerted and not unannoyed,	
He stooped and struck a little huckleberry	
The way a player curls around a football.	
"Wrong shape, wrong color, and wrong scent," I said.	40
The huckleberry rolled him on his head.	
At last it was a fly. He shot and missed;	
And the fly circled round him in derision.	
But for the fly he might have made me think	18/
He had been at his poetry, comparing	45

Nailhead with fly and fly with huckleberry: How like a fly, how very like a fly. But the real fly he missed would never do; The missed fly made me dangerously skeptic.

Won't this whole instinct matter bear revision? 50 Won't almost any theory bear revision? To err is human, not to, animal. Or so we pay the compliment to instinct, Only too liberal of our compliment That really takes away instead of gives. 55 Our worship, humor, conscientiousness Went long since to the dogs under the table. And served us right for having instituted Downward comparisons. As long on earth As our comparisons were stoutly upward 60 With gods and angels, we were men at least, But little lower than the gods and angels. But once comparisons were yielded downward, Once we began to see our images Reflected in the mud and even dust, 65 'Twas disillusion upon disillusion. We were lost piecemeal to the animals, Like people thrown out to delay the wolves. Nothing but fallibility was left us, And this day's work made even that seem doubtful. 70

#### A BLUE RIBBON AT AMESBURY

Such a fine pullet ought to go All coiffured to a winter show, And be exhibited, and win. The answer is this one has been—

And come with all her honors home. Her golden leg, her coral comb, Her fluff of plumage, white as chalk, Her style, were all the fancy's talk.	5
It seems as if you must have heard. She scored an almost perfect bird. In her we make ourselves acquainted With one a Sewell might have painted.	10
Here common with the flock again, At home in her abiding pen, She lingers feeding at the trough, The last to let night drive her off.	15
The one who gave her ankle-band, Her keeper, empty pail in hand, He lingers too, averse to slight His chores for all the wintry night.	20
He leans against the dusty wall, Immured almost beyond recall, A depth past many swinging doors And many litter-muffled floors.	
He meditates the breeder's art. He has a half a mind to start, With her for Mother Eve, a race That shall all living things displace.	25
'Tis ritual with her to lay The full six days, then rest a day; At which rate barring broodiness She well may score an egg-success.	30
The gatherer can always tell	

Her well-turned egg's brown sturdy shell, As safe a vehicle of seed As is vouchsafed to feathered breed.	35
No human specter at the feast Can scant or hurry her the least. She takes her time to take her fill. She whets a sleepy sated bill.	40
She gropes across the pen alone To peck herself a precious stone. She waters at the patent fount. And so to roost, the last to mount.	
The roost is her extent of flight. Yet once she rises to the height, She shoulders with a wing so strong She makes the whole flock move along.	45
The night is setting in to blow. It scours the windowpane with snow, But barely gets from them or her For comment a complacent chirr.	50
The lowly pen is yet a hold Against the dark and wind and cold To give a prospect to a plan And warrant prudence in a man.	55

### A DRUMLIN WOODCHUCK

One thing has a shelving bank, Another a rotting plank, To give it cozier skies And make up for its lack of size.

My own strategic retreat Is where two rocks almost meet, And still more secure and snug, A two-door burrow I dug.	5
With those in mind at my back I can sit forth exposed to attack, As one who shrewdly pretends That he and the world are friends.	10
All we who prefer to live Have a little whistle we give, And flash, at the least alarm We dive down under the farm.	15
We allow some time for guile And don't come out for a while, Either to eat or drink. We take occasion to think.	20
And if after the hunt goes past And the double-barreled blast (Like war and pestilence And the loss of common sense),	
If I can with confidence say That still for another day, Or even another year, I will be there for you, my dear,	25
It will be because, though small As measured against the All, I have been so instinctively thorough About my crevice and burrow.	30

# THE GOLD HESPERIDEE

Square Matthew Hale's young grafted apple tree Began to blossom at the age of five; And after having entertained the bee, And cast its flowers and all the stems but three, It set itself to keep those three alive; And downy wax the three began to thrive.	5
They had just given themselves a little twist And turned from looking up and being kissed To looking down and yet not being sad, When came Square Hale with Let's see what we had; And two was all he counted (one he missed); But two for a beginning wasn't bad.	10
His little Matthew, also five years old, Was led into the presence of the tree And raised among the leaves and duly told, We mustn't touch them yet, but see and see! And what was green would by and by be gold. Their name was called the Gold Hesperidee.	15
As regularly as he went to feed the pig Or milk the cow, he visited the fruit, The dew of night and morning on his boot. Dearer to him than any barnyard brute, Each swung in danger on its slender twig, A bubble on a pipestem, growing big.	20
Long since they swung as three instead of two— One more, he thought, to take him safely through. Three made it certain nothing Fate could do With codlin moth or rusty parasite Would keep him now from proving with a bite	25

That the name Gold Hesperidee was right.	30
And so he brought them to the verge of frost. But one day when the foliage all went swish With autumn and the fruit was rudely tossed, He thought no special goodness could be lost If he fulfilled at last his summer wish, And saw them picked unbruised and in a dish,	35
Where they could ripen safely to the eating. But when he came to look, no apples there Under or on the tree, or anywhere, And the light-natured tree seemed not to care! "Twas Sunday and Square Hale was dressed for meeting. The final summons into church was beating.	40
Just as he was, without an uttered sound At those who'd done him such a wrong as that, Square Matthew Hale took off his Sunday hat And ceremoniously laid it on the ground, And leaping on it with a solemn bound, Danced slowly on it till he trod it flat.	45
Then suddenly he saw the thing he did, And looked around to see if he was seen. This was the sin that Ahaz was forbid (The meaning of the passage had been hid): To look upon the tree when it was green And worship apples. What else could it mean?	50
God saw him dancing in the orchard path, But mercifully kept the passing crowd From witnessing the fault of one so proud. And so the story wasn't told in Gath;	55

### IN TIME OF CLOUDBURST

Let the downpour roil and toil! The worst it can do to me Is carry some garden soil A little nearer the sea.

Tis the world-old way of the rain When it comes to a mountain farm To exact for a present gain A little of future harm.

And the harm is none too sure, For when all that was rotted rich Shall be in the end scoured poor, When my garden has gone down ditch,

Some force has but to apply, And summits shall be immersed, The bottom of seas raised dry— The slope of the earth reversed.

Then all I need do is run
To the other end of the slope,
And on tracts laid new to the sun,
Begin all over to hope.

Some worn old tool of my own Will be turned up by the plow, The wood of it changed to stone, But as ready to wield as now.

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May my application so close
To so endless a repetition
Not make me tired and morose
And resentful of man's condition.

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### A ROADSIDE STAND

The little old house was out with a little new shed In front at the edge of the road where the traffic sped, A roadside stand that too pathetically pled, It would not be fair to say for a dole of bread, But for some of the money, the cash, whose flow supports The flower of cities from sinking and withering faint. The polished traffic passed with a mind ahead, Or if ever aside a moment, then out of sorts At having the landscape marred with the artless paint Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong 10 Offered for sale wild berries in wooden quarts, Or crook-necked golden squash with silver warts, Or beauty rest in a beautiful mountain scene. You have the money, but if you want to be mean, Why, keep your money (this crossly) and go along. 15 The hurt to the scenery wouldn't be my complaint So much as the trusting sorrow of what is unsaid: Here far from the city we make our roadside stand And ask for some city money to feel in hand To try if it will not make our being expand, 20 And give us the life of the moving-pictures' promise That the party in power is said to be keeping from us.

It is in the news that all these pitiful kin Are to be bought out and mercifully gathered in To live in villages, next to the theater and store,

Seizes the dead by the middle, And heaving him high in air, Carries him out of there. No one stands round to stare. It is nobody else's affair.

It couldn't be called ungentle.
But how thoroughly departmental.

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# THE OLD BARN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE FOGS

Where's this barn's house? It never had a house, Or joined with sheds in ring-around a dooryard. The hunter scuffling leaves goes by at dusk, The gun reversed that he went out with shouldered. The harvest moon and then the hunter's moon. Well, the moon after that, came one at last To close this outpost barn and close the season. The fur-thing, muff-thing, rocking in and out Across the threshold in the twilight fled him. He took the props down used for propping open, And set them up again for propping shut, The widespread double doors two stories high. The advantage-disadvantage of these doors Was that tramp taking sanctuary there Must leave them unlocked to betray his presence. They could be locked but from the outside only. There is a fellow on the ocean now Or down a mine or at the mill (I met him) Who slept there in a mow of meadow hay One night (he told me). And the barn he meant Was the one I meant. Our details agreed.

We said Well twice to what we had in common, The old barn at the bottom of the fogs. Its only windows were the crevices All up and down it. So that waking there 25 Next morning to the light of day was more Like waking in a cage of silver bars. Its locks were props—and that reminded him. Trust him to have his bitter politics Against his unacquaintances the rich 30 Who sleep in houses of their own, though mortgaged. Conservatives, they don't know what to save. Consider what they treasure under glass, Yet leave such lovely shafts outdoors to perish. Would someone only act in time we yet 35 Might see them on a rack like famous oars, Their label Prop-Locks, only specimens In chestnut now become a precious wood As relic of a vanished race of trees— When these go there will be none to replace them. 40 Yes, right I was, the locks were props outside; And it had almost given him troubled dreams To think that though he could not lock himself in, The cheapest tramp that came along that way Could mischievously lock him in to stay. 45

### ON THE HEART'S BEGINNING TO CLOUD THE MIND

Something I saw or thought I saw In the desert at midnight in Utah, Looking out of my lower berth At moonlit sky and moonlit earth. The sky had here and there a star;

The earth had a single light afar, A flickering, human pathetic light, That was maintained against the night, It seemed to me, by the people there, With a Godforsaken brute despair. 10 It would flutter and fall in half an hour Like the last petal off a flower. But my heart was beginning to cloud my mind. I knew a tale of a better kind. That far light flickers because of trees. 15 The people can burn it as long as they please; And when their interests in it end. They can leave it to someone else to tend. Come back that way a summer hence, I should find it no more no less intense. 20 I pass, but scarcely pass no doubt, When one will say, "Let us put it out." The other without demur agrees. They can keep it burning as long as they please; They can put it out whenever they please. 25 One looks out last from the darkened room At the shiny desert with spots of gloom That might be people and are but cedar, Have no purpose, have no leader, Have never made the first move to assemble, 30 And so are nothing to make her tremble. She can think of places that are not thus Without indulging a "Not for us!" Life is not so sinister-grave. Matter of fact has made them brave. 35 He is husband, she is wife. She fears not him, they fear not life. They know where another light has been,

And more than one, to theirs akin, But earlier out for bed tonight, So lost on me in my surface flight.

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This I saw when waking late, Going by at a railroad rate, Looking through wreaths of engine smoke Far into the lives of other folk.

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### THE FIGURE IN THE DOORWAY

The grade surmounted, we were riding high Through level mountains nothing to the eye But scrub oak, scrub oak and the lack of earth That kept the oaks from getting any girth. But as through the monotony we ran, We came to where there was a living man. His great gaunt figure filled his cabin door, And had he fallen inward on the floor, He must have measured to the further wall. But we who passed were not to see him fall. The miles and miles he lived from anywhere Were evidently something he could bear. He stood unshaken, and if grim and gaunt, It was not necessarily from want. He had the oaks for heating and for light. He had a hen, he had a pig in sight. He had a well, he had the rain to catch. He had a ten-by-twenty garden patch. Nor did he lack for common entertainment. That I assume was what our passing train meant. He could look at us in our diner eating, And if so moved uncurl a hand in greeting.

# AT WOODWARD'S GARDENS

A boy, presuming on his intellect,	
Once showed two little monkeys in a cage	
A burning-glass they could not understand	
And never could be made to understand.	
Words are no good: to say it was a lens	5
For gathering solar rays would not have helped.	
But let him show them how the weapon worked.	
He made the sun a pinpoint on the nose	
Of first one, then the other, till it brought	
A look of puzzled dimness to their eyes	10
That blinking could not seem to blink away.	
They stood arms laced together at the bars,	
And exchanged troubled glances over life.	
One put a thoughtful hand up to his nose	
As if reminded—or as if perhaps	15
Within a million years of an idea.	
He got his purple little knuckles stung.	
The already known had once more been confirmed	
By psychological experiment,	
And that were all the finding to announce	20
Had the boy not presumed too close and long.	
There was a sudden flash of arm, a snatch,	
And the glass was the monkeys', not the boy's.	
Precipitately they retired back-cage	
And instituted an investigation	25
On their part, though without the needed insight.	
They bit the glass and listened for the flavor.	
They broke the handle and the binding off it.	
Then none the wiser, frankly gave it up,	
And having hid it in their bedding straw	30
Against the day of prisoners' ennui,	

Came dryly forward to the bars again
To answer for themselves: Who said it mattered
What monkeys did or didn't understand?
They might not understand a burning-glass.
They might not understand the sun itself.
It's knowing what to do with things that counts.

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### A RECORD STRIDE

In a Vermont bedroom closet
With a door of two broad boards
And for back wall a crumbling old chimney
(And that's what their toes are towards),

I have a pair of shoes standing, Old rivals of sagging leather, Who once kept surpassing each other, But now live even together.

They listen for me in the bedroom To ask me a thing or two About who is too old to go walking, With too much stress on the who.

I wet one last year at Montauk For a hat I had to save. The other I wet at the Cliff House In an extra-vagant wave.

Two entirely different grandchildren Got me into my double adventure. But when they grow up and can read this I hope they won't take it for censure.

I touch my tongue to the shoes now, And unless my sense is at fault, On one I can taste Atlantic, On the other Pacific, salt.	
One foot in each great ocean Is a record stride or stretch. The authentic shoes it was made in I should sell for what they would fetch.	25
But instead I proudly devote them To my museum and muse; So the thick-skins needn't act thin-skinned About being past-active shoes.	30
And I ask all to try to forgive me For being as overelated As if I had measured the country And got the United States stated.	35
LOST IN HEAVEN	
The clouds, the source of rain, one stormy night Offered an opening to the source of dew; Which I accepted with impatient sight, Looking for my old sky-marks in the blue.	
But stars were scarce in that part of the sky,	5

"Where, where in Heaven am I? But don't tell me!

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And no two were of the same constellation—

Seeing myself well lost once more, I sighed,

No one was bright enough to identify; So 'twas with not ungrateful consternation, O opening clouds, by opening on me wide. Let's let my heavenly lostness overwhelm me."

#### DESERT PLACES

Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast In a field I looked into going past, And the ground almost covered smooth in snow, But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

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The woods around it have it—it is theirs. All animals are smothered in their lairs. I am too absent-spirited to count; The loneliness includes me unawares.

And lonely as it is, that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less—
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces Between stars—on stars where no human race is. I have it in me so much nearer home To scare myself with my own desert places.

## LEAVES COMPARED WITH FLOWERS

A tree's leaves may be ever so good, So may its bark, so may its wood; But unless you put the right thing to its root It never will show much flower or fruit.

But I may be one who does not care Ever to have tree bloom or bear.

Leaves for smooth and bark for rough, Leaves and bark may be tree enough.

Some giant trees have bloom so small
They might as well have none at all.

Late in life I have come on fern.
Now lichens are due to have their turn.

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I bade men tell me which in brief, Which is fairer, flower or leaf. They did not have the wit to say, Leaves by night and flowers by day.

Leaves and bark, leaves and bark, To lean against and hear in the dark. Petals I may have once pursued. Leaves are all my darker mood.

A LEAF-TREADER

I have been treading on leaves all day until I am autumntired.

God knows all the color and form of leaves I have trodden on and mired.

Perhaps I have put forth too much strength and been too fierce from fear.

I have safely trodden underfoot the leaves of another year.

All summer long they were overhead, more lifted up than I. 5 To come to their final place in earth they had to pass me by. All summer long I thought I heard them threatening under their breath.

And when they came it seemed with a will to carry me with them to death.

They spoke to the fugitive in my heart as if it were leaf to leaf.

They tapped at my eyelids and touched my lips with an invitation to grief. 10

But it was no reason I had to go because they had to go. Now up, my knee, to keep on top of another year of snow.

### ON TAKING FROM THE TOP TO BROADEN THE BASE

Roll stones down on our head! You squat old pyramid, Your last good avalanche Was long since slid.

Your top has sunk too low, Your base has spread too wide, For you to roll one stone Down if you tried.

But even at the word A pebble hit the roof, Another shot through glass, Demanding proof.

Before their panic hands Were fighting for the latch, The mud came in one cold Unleavened batch.

And none was left to prate Of an old mountain's case That still took from its top To broaden its base.

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### THEY WERE WELCOME TO THEIR BELIEF

Grief may have thought it was grief. Care may have thought it was care. They were welcome to their belief, The overimportant pair.

No, it took all the snows that clung To the low roof over his bed, Beginning when he was young, To induce the one snow on his head.

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But whenever the roof came white The head in the dark below Was a shade less the color of night, A shade more the color of snow.

Grief may have thought it was grief.
Care may have thought it was care.
But neither one was the thief
Of his raven color of hair.

### THE STRONG ARE SAYING NOTHING

The soil now gets a rumpling soft and damp, And small regard to the future of any weed. The final flat of the hoe's approval stamp Is reserved for the bed of a few selected seed.

There is seldom more than a man to a harrowed piece. Men work alone, their lots plowed far apart, One stringing a chain of seed in an open crease, And another stumbling after a halting cart.

To the fresh and black of the squares of early mold

The leafless bloom of a plum is fresh and white; 10
Though there's more than a doubt if the weather is not too cold
For the bees to come and serve its beauty aright.

Wind goes from farm to farm in wave on wave, But carries no cry of what is hoped to be. There may be little or much beyond the grave, But the strong are saying nothing until they see.

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### THE MASTER SPEED

No speed of wind or water rushing by
But you have speed far greater. You can climb
Back up a stream of radiance to the sky,
And back through history up the stream of time.
And you were given this swiftness, not for haste
Nor chiefly that you may go where you will,
But in the rush of everything to waste,
That you may have the power of standing still—
Off any still or moving thing you say.
Two such as you with such a master speed
Cannot be parted nor be swept away
From one another once you are agreed
That life is only life forevermore
Together wing to wing and oar to oar.

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# MOON COMPASSES

I stole forth dimly in the dripping pause Between two downpours to see what there was. And a masked moon had spread down compass rays To a cone mountain in the midnight haze, As if the final estimate were hers;
And as it measured in her calipers,
The mountain stood exalted in its place.
So love will take between the hands a face. . . .

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### NEITHER OUT FAR NOR IN DEEP

The people along the sand All turn and look one way. They turn their back on the land. They look at the sea all day.

As long as it takes to pass A ship keeps raising its hull; The wetter ground like glass Reflects a standing gull.

The land may vary more; But wherever the truth may be— The water comes ashore, And the people look at the sea.

They cannot look out far.
They cannot look in deep.
But when was that ever a bar
To any watch they keep?

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#### **VOICE WAYS**

Some things are never clear.
But the weather is clear tonight,
Thanks to a clearing rain.
The mountains are brought up near,
The stars are brought out bright.

Your old sweet-cynical strain Would come in like you here: "So we won't say nothing is clear."

#### DESIGN

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I found a dimpled spider, fat and white, On a white heal-all, holding up a moth Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth— Assorted characters of death and blight Mixed ready to begin the morning right, Like the ingredients of a witches' broth— A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth, And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being white, The wayside blue and innocent heal-all? What brought the kindred spider to that height, Then steered the white moth thither in the night? What but design of darkness to appall?—
If design govern in a thing so small.

### ON A BIRD SINGING IN ITS SLEEP

A bird half wakened in the lunar noon Sang halfway through its little inborn tune. Partly because it sang but once all night And that from no especial bush's height, Partly because it sang ventriloquist And had the inspiration to desist Almost before the prick of hostile ears, It ventured less in peril than appears. It could not have come down to us so far,

Through the interstices of things ajar On the long bead chain of repeated birth, To be a bird while we are men on earth, If singing out of sleep and dream that way Had made it much more easily a prey.

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### **AFTERFLAKES**

In the thick of a teeming snowfall I saw my shadow on snow. I turned and looked back up at the sky, Where we still look to ask the why Of everything below.

5

If I shed such a darkness, If the reason was in me, That shadow of mine should show in form Against the shapeless shadow of storm, How swarthy I must be.

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I turned and looked back upward. The whole sky was blue; And the thick flakes floating at a pause Were but frost knots on an airy gauze, With the sun shining through.

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#### CLEAR AND COLDER

Wind, the season-climate mixer, In my Witches' Weather Primer Says, to make this Fall Elixir First you let the summer simmer, Using neither spoon nor skimmer,

Till about the right consistence. (This like fate by stars is reckoned, None remaining in existence Under magnitude the second.)

Then take some leftover winter
Far to north of the St. Lawrence.
Leaves to strip and branches splinter,
Bring on wind. Bring rain in torrents—
Colder than the season warrants.

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Dash it with some snow for powder. If this seems like witchcraft rather, If this seems a witches' chowder (All my eye and Cotton Mather!),

Wait and watch the liquor settle. I could stand whole dayfuls of it. Wind she brews a heady kettle. Human beings love it—love it. Gods above are not above it.

### UNHARVESTED

A scent of ripeness from over a wall.
And come to leave the routine road
And look for what had made me stall,
There sure enough was an apple tree
That had eased itself of its summer load,
And of all but its trivial foliage free,
Now breathed as light as a lady's fan.
For there there had been an apple fall

As complete as the apple had given man. The ground was one circle of solid red.

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May something go always unharvested! May much stay out of our stated plan, Apples or something forgotten and left, So smelling their sweetness would be no theft.

#### THERE ARE ROUGHLY ZONES

We sit indoors and talk of the cold outside. And every gust that gathers strength and heaves Is a threat to the house. But the house has long been tried. We think of the tree. If it never again has leaves, We'll know, we say, that this was the night it died. 5 It is very far north, we admit, to have brought the peach. What comes over a man, is it soul or mind— That to no limits and bounds he can stay confined? You would say his ambition was to extend the reach Clear to the Arctic of every living kind. 10 Why is his nature forever so hard to teach That though there is no fixed line between wrong and right, There are roughly zones whose laws must be obeyed? There is nothing much we can do for the tree tonight, But we can't help feeling more than a little betrayed 15 That the northwest wind should rise to such a height Just when the cold went down so many below. The tree has no leaves and may never have them again. We must wait till some months hence in the spring to know. But if it is destined never again to grow, 20 It can blame this limitless trait in the hearts of men.

#### A TRIAL RUN

I said to myself almost in prayer,
It will start hair-raising currents of air
When you give it the livid metal-sap.
It will make a homicidal roar.
It will shake its cast stone reef of floor.
It will gather speed till your nerves prepare
To hear it wreck in a thunderclap.
But stand your ground,
As they say in war.
It is cotter-pinned, it is bedded true.
Everything its parts can do
Has been thought out and accounted for.
Your least touch sets it going round,
And when to stop it rests with you.

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### NOT QUITE SOCIAL

Some of you will be glad I did what I did, And the rest won't want to punish me too severely For finding a thing to do that though not forbid Yet wasn't enjoined and wasn't expected, clearly.

To punish me overcruelly wouldn't be right For merely giving you once more gentle proof That the city's hold on a man is no more tight Than when its walls rose higher than any roof.

You may taunt me with not being able to flee the earth. You have me there, but loosely, as I would be held. The way of understanding is partly mirth. I would not be taken as ever having rebelled.

#### VI. WASPISH

On glossy wires artistically bent He draws himself up to his full extent. His natty wings with self-assurance perk. His stinging quarters menacingly work. Poor egotist, he has no way of knowing But he's as good as anybody going.

### VII. ONE GUESS

He has dust in his eyes and a fan for a wing, A leg akimbo with which he can sing, And a mouthful of dyestuff instead of a sting.

### VIII. THE HARDSHIP OF ACCOUNTING

Never ask of money spent
Where the spender thinks it went.
Nobody was ever meant
To remember or invent
What he did with every cent.

### IX. NOT ALL THERE

I turned to speak to God About the world's despair; But to make bad matters worse I found God wasn't there.

God turned to speak to me (Don't anybody laugh); God found I wasn't there— At least not over half. 5

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### X. IN DIVÉS' DIVE

It is late at night and still I am losing, But still I am steady and unaccusing.

As long as the Declaration guards My right to be equal in number of cards,

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It is nothing to me who runs the Dive. Let's have a look at another five.

#### THE VINDICTIVES

You like to hear about gold. A king filled his prison room As full as the room could hold To the top of his reach on the wall With every known shape of the stuff. 'Twas to buy himself off his doom. But it wasn't ransom enough. His captors accepted it all, But didn't let go of the king. They made him send out a call To his subjects to gather them more. And his subjects wrung all they could wring Out of temple and palace and store. But when there seemed no more to bring, His captors convicted the king Of once having started a war, And strangled the wretch with a string. But really that gold was not half That a king might have hoped to compel— Not a half, not a third, not a tithe.

The king had scarce ceased to writhe, When hate gave a terrible laugh, Like a manhole opened to Hell. If gold pleased the conqueror, well, That gold should be the one thing 25 The conqueror henceforth should lack. They gave no more thought to the king. All joined in the game of hide-gold. They swore all the gold should go back Deep into the earth whence it came. 30 Their minds ran on cranny and crack. All joined in the maddening game. The tale is still boastingly told Of many a treasure by name That vanished into the black 35 And put out its light for the foe. That self-sack and self-overthrow, That was the splendidest sack Since the forest Germans sacked Rome And took the gold candlesticks home. 40 One Inca prince on the rack, And late in his last hour alive, Told them in what lake to dive To seek what they seemed so to want. They dived and nothing was found. 45 He told them to dive till they drowned. The whole fierce conquering pack Hunted and tortured and raged. There were suns of story and vaunt They searched for into Brazil,

Their tongues hanging out unassuaged.

But the conquered grew meek and still. They slowly and silently aged. They kept their secrets and died, Maliciously satisfied. 55 One knew of a burial hole In the floor of a tribal cave. Where under deep ash and charcoal And cracked bones, human and beast, The midden of feast upon feast, 60 Was coiled in its last resting grave The great treasure wanted the most, The great thousand-linked gold chain, Each link of a hundredweight, That once between post and post 65 (In-leaning under the strain), And looped ten times back and forth, Had served as a palace gate. Some said it had gone to the coast, Some over the mountains east, 70 Some into the country north, On the backs of a single-file host, Commanded by one sun-priest, And raising a dust with a train Of flashing links in the sun. 75 No matter what some may say. (The saying is never done.) There bright in the filth it lay Untarnished by rust and decay. And be all plunderers curst. 80

"The best way to hate is the worst." Tis to find what the hated need, Never mind of what actual worth,

And wipe that out of the earth.	
Let them die of unsatisfied greed,	85
Of unsatisfied love of display,	
Of unsatisfied love of the high,	
Unvulgar, unsoiled, and ideal.	
Let their trappings be taken away.	
Let them suffer starvation and die	90
Of being brought down to the real."	
•	
THE BEARER OF EVIL TIDINGS	
The bearer of evil tidings,	
When he was halfway there,	
Remembered that evil tidings	
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Were a dangerous thing to bear.

So when he came to the parting Where one road led to the throne And one went off to the mountains And into the wild unknown,

He took the one to the mountains. He ran through the Vale of Cashmere, He ran through the rhododendrons Till he came to the land of Pamir.

And there in a precipice valley A girl of his age he met Took him home to her bower, Or he might be running yet.

She taught him her tribe's religion: How, ages and ages since, A princess en route from China

To marry a Persian prince	20
Had been found with child; and her army Had come to a troubled halt. And though a god was the father And nobody else at fault,	
It had seemed discreet to remain there And neither go on nor back. So they stayed and declared a village There in the land of the Yak.	25
And the child that came of the princess Established a royal line, And his mandates were given heed to Because he was born divine.	30
And that was why there were people On one Himalayan shelf; And the bearer of evil tidings Decided to stay there himself.	35
At least he had this in common With the race he chose to adopt: They had both of them had their reasons For stopping where they had stopped.	40
As for his evil tidings,	

Belshazzar's overthrow,
Why hurry to tell Belshazzar
What soon enough he would know?

### IRIS BY NIGHT

One misty evening, one another's guide,	
We two were groping down a Malvern side	
The last wet fields and dripping hedges home.	
There came a moment of confusing lights,	
Such as according to belief in Rome	5
Were seen of old at Memphis on the heights	
Before the fragments of a former sun	
Could concentrate anew and rise as one.	
Light was a paste of pigment in our eyes.	
And then there was a moon and then a scene	10
So watery as to seem submarine;	
In which we two stood saturated, drowned.	
The clover-mingled rowan on the ground	
Had taken all the water it could as dew,	
And still the air was saturated too,	15
Its airy pressure turned to water weight.	
Then a small rainbow like a trellis gate,	
A very small moon-made prismatic bow,	
Stood closely over us through which to go.	
And then we were vouchsafed the miracle	20
That never yet to other two befell	
And I alone of us have lived to tell.	
A wonder! Bow and rainbow as it bent,	
Instead of moving with us as we went	
(To keep the pots of gold from being found),	25
It lifted from its dewy pediment	
Its two mote-swimming many-colored ends	
And gathered them together in a ring.	
And we stood in it softly circled round	
From all division time or foe can bring	30
In a relation of elected friends	

#### BUILD SOIL

### A political pastoral

Why, Tityrus! But you've forgotten me. I'm Meliboeus the potato man, The one you had the talk with, you remember, Here on this very campus years ago. Hard times have struck me and I'm on the move. 5 I've had to give my interval farm up For interest, and I've bought a mountain farm For nothing down, all-out-doors of a place, All woods and pasture only fit for sheep. But sheep is what I'm going into next. 10 I'm done forever with potato crops At thirty cents a bushel. Give me sheep. I know wool's down to seven cents a pound. But I don't calculate to sell my wool. I didn't my potatoes. I consumed them. 15 I'll dress up in sheep's clothing and eat sheep. The Muse takes care of you. You live by writing Your poems on a farm and call that farming. Oh, I don't blame you. I say take life easy. I should myself, only I don't know how. 20 But have some pity on us who have to work. Why don't you use your talents as a writer To advertise our farms to city buyers, Or else write something to improve food prices. Get in a poem toward the next election. 25 Oh, Meliboeus, I have half a mind To take a writing hand in politics. Before now poetry has taken notice

Of wars, and what are wars but politics

Transformed from chronic to acute and bloody?	30
I may be wrong, but, Tityrus, to me The times seem revolutionary bad.	
The question is whether they've reached a depth Of desperation that would warrant poetry's Leaving love's alternations, joy and grief, The weather's alternations, summer and winter, Our age-long theme, for the uncertainty Of judging who is a contemporary liar—	35
Who in particular, when all alike Get called as much in clashes of ambition.	40
Life may be tragically bad, and I Make bold to sing it so, but do I dare Name names and tell you who by name is wicked? Whittier's luck with Skipper Ireson awes me— Many men's luck with Greatest Washington (Who sat for Stuart's portrait, but who sat Equally for the nation's Constitution). I prefer to sing safely in the realm	45
Of types, composite and imagined people: To affirm there is such a thing as evil Personified, but ask to be excused From saying on a jury "Here's the guilty."	50
I doubt if you're convinced the times are bad.	
I keep my eye on Congress, Meliboeus. They're in the best position of us all To know if anything is very wrong. I mean they could be trusted to give the alarm If earth were thought about to change its axis,	55
Or a star coming to dilate the sun.  As long as lightly all their livelong sessions.	60

Like a yardful of schoolboys out at recess Before their plays and games were organized, They yelling mix tag, hide-and-seek, hopscotch, And leapfrog in each other's way—all's well. Let newspapers profess to fear the worst! Nothing's portentous, I am reassured.	65
Is socialism needed, do you think?	
We have it now. For socialism is An element in any government. There's no such thing as socialism pure—	70
Except as an abstraction of the mind. There's only democratic socialism, Monarchic socialism, oligarchic— The last being what they seem to have in Russia.	
You often get it most in monarchy, Least in democracy. In practice, pure, I don't know what it would be. No one knows. I have no doubt like all the loves when Philosophized together into one—	75
One sickness of the body and the soul.  Thank God our practice holds the loves apart,  Beyond embarrassing self-consciousness  Where natural friends are met, where dogs are kept,  Where women pray with priests. There is no love.	80
There's only love of men and women, love Of children, love of friends, of men, of God: Divine love, human love, parental love, Roughly discriminated for the rough.  Poetry, itself once more, is back in love.	85
Pardon the analogy, my Meliboeus,	90

For sweeping me away. Let's see, where was I? But don't you think more should be socialized Than is?

What should you mean by socialized?

Made good for everyone—things like inventions— Made so we all should get the good of them-95 All, not just great exploiting businesses. We sometimes only get the bad of them. In your sense of the word ambition has Been socialized—the first propensity To be attempted. Greed may well come next. 100 But the worst one of all to leave uncurbed, Unsocialized, is ingenuity: Which for no sordid self-aggrandizement, For nothing but its own blind satisfaction (In this it is as much like hate as love), 105 Works in the dark as much against as for us. Even while we talk some chemist at Columbia Is stealthily contriving wool from jute That when let loose upon the grazing world Will put ten thousand farmers out of sheep. 110 Everyone asks for freedom for himself, The man free love, the businessman free trade, The writer and talker free speech and free press. Political ambition has been taught, By being punished back, it is not free: 115 It must at some point gracefully refrain. Greed has been taught a little abnegation And shall be more before we're done with it. It is just fool enough to think itself

Self-taught. But our brute snarling and lashing taught it None shall be as ambitious as he can.  None should be as ingenious as he could,  Not if I had my say. Bounds should be set  To ingenuity for being so cruel  In bringing change unheralded on the unready.	
I elect you to put the curb on it.	125
Were I dictator, I'll tell you what I'd do.	
What should you do?	
I'd let things take their course And then I'd claim the credit for the outcome.	
You'd make a sort of safety-first dictator.	130
Don't let the things I say against myself Betray you into taking sides against me, Or it might get you into trouble with me. I'm not afraid to prophesy the future, And be judged by the outcome, Meliboeus. Listen and I will take my dearest risk. We're always too much out or too much in. At present from a cosmical dilation	135
We're so much out that the odds are against Our ever getting inside in again. But inside in is where we've got to get. My friends all know I'm interpersonal. But long before I'm interpersonal,	140
Away 'way down inside I'm personal.  Just so before we're international,  We're national and act as nationals.  The colors are kept unmixed on the palette,  Or better on dish plates all around the room,	145

So the effect when they are mixed on canvas	
May seem almost exclusively designed.	150
Some minds are so confounded intermental	
They remind me of pictures on a palette:	
"Look at what happened. Surely some god pinxit.	
Come look at my significant mud pie."	
It's hard to tell which is the worse abhorrence,	155
Whether it's persons pied or nations pied.	
Don't let me seem to say the exchange, the encounter,	
May not be the important thing at last.	
It well may be. We meet—I don't say when—	
But must bring to the meeting the maturest,	160
The longest-saved-up, raciest, localest	
We have strength of reserve in us to bring.	
Tityrus, sometimes I'm perplexed myself	
To find the good of commerce. Why should I	
Have to sell you my apples and buy yours?	165
It can't be just to give the robber a chance	
To catch them and take toll of them in transit.	
Too mean a thought to get much comfort out of.	
I figure that like any bandying	
Of words or toys, it ministers to health.	170
It very likely quickens and refines us.	
To market 'tis our destiny to go.	
But much as in the end we bring for sale there,	
There is still more we never bring or should bring;	
More that should be kept back—the soil for instance,	175
In my opinion—though we both know poets	
Who fall all over each other to bring soil	
And even subsoil and hardpan to market.	
To sell the hav off let alone the soil	

Is an unpardonable sin in farming. 180 The moral is, make a late start to market. Let me preach to you, will you, Meliboeus? Preach on. I thought you were already preaching. But preach and see if I can tell the difference. Needless to say to you, my argument 185 Is not to lure the city to the country. Let those possess the land, and only those, Who love it with a love so strong and stupid That they may be abused and taken advantage of And made fun of by business, law, and art; 190 They still hang on. That so much of the earth's Unoccupied need not make us uneasy. We don't pretend to complete occupancy. The world's one globe, human society Another softer globe that slightly flattened 195 Rests on the world, and clinging slowly rolls. We have our own round shape to keep unbroken. The world's size has no more to do with us Than has the universe's. We are balls. We are round from the same source of roundness. 200 We are both round because the mind is round, Because all reasoning is in a circle. At least that's why the universe is round. If what you're preaching is a line of conduct, Just what am I supposed to do about it? 205 Reason in circles?

No, refuse to be Seduced back to the land by any claim The land may seem to have on man to use it. Let none assume to till the land but farmers.

I only speak to you as one of them.	210
You shall go to your run-out mountain farm,	
Poor castaway of commerce, and so live	
That none shall ever see you come to market—	
Not for a long, long time. Plant, breed, produce,	
But what you raise or grow, why, feed it out,	215
Eat it or plow it under where it stands,	
To build the soil. For what is more accursed	
Than an impoverished soil, pale and metallic?	
What cries more to our kind for sympathy?	
I'll make a compact with you, Meliboeus,	220
To match you deed for deed and plan for plan.	
Friends crowd around me with their five-year plans	
That Soviet Russia has made fashionable.	
You come to me and I'll unfold to you	
A five-year plan I call so not because	225
It takes ten years or so to carry out,	
Rather because it took five years at least	
To think it out. Come close, let us conspire—	
In self-restraint, if in restraint of trade.	
You will go to your run-out mountain farm	230
And do what I command you. I take care	
To command only what you meant to do	
Anyway. That is my style of dictator.	
Build soil. Turn the farm in upon itself	
Until it can contain itself no more,	235
But sweating-full, drips wine and oil a little.	
I will go to my run-out social mind	
And be as unsocial with it as I can.	
The thought I have, and my first impulse is	
To take to market—I will turn it under.	240
The thought from that thought—I will turn it under.	
And so on to the limit of my nature.	

We are too much out, and if we won't draw in We shall be driven in. I was brought up A state-rights free-trade Democrat. What's that? An inconsistency. The state shall be Laws to itself, it seems, and yet have no Control of what it sells or what it buys. Suppose someone comes near me who in rate Of speech and thinking is so much my better I am imposed on, silenced and discouraged. Do I submit to being supplied by him As the more economical producer, More wonderful, more beautiful producer? No. I unostentatiously move off Far enough for my thought-flow to resume. Thought product and food product are to me Nothing compared to the producing of them. I sent you once a song with the refrain:

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Let me be the one
To do what is done—

My share at least, lest I be empty-idle.
Keep off each other and keep each other off.
You see the beauty of my proposal is
It needn't wait on general revolution.
I bid you to a one-man revolution—
The only revolution that is coming.
We're too unseparate out among each other—
With goods to sell and notions to impart.
A youngster comes to me with half a quatrain
To ask me if I think it worth the pains
Of working out the rest, the other half.
I am brought guaranteed young prattle poems
Made publicly in school, above suspicion

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#### TO A THINKER

The last step taken found your heft
Decidedly upon the left.
One more would throw you on the right.
Another still—you see your plight.
You call this thinking, but it's walking.
Not even that, it's only rocking,
Or weaving like a stabled horse:
From force to matter and back to force,
From form to content and back to form,
From norm to crazy and back to norm,
From bound to free and back to bound,

From sound to sense and back to sound. So back and forth. It almost scares A man the way things come in pairs. Just now you're off democracy (With a polite regret to be) And leaning on dictatorship; But if you will accept the tip, In less than no time, tongue and pen, You'll be a democrat again. A reasoner and good as such, Don't let it bother you too much If it makes you look helpless, please, And a temptation to the tease. Suppose you've no direction in you, I don't see but you must continue To use the gift you do possess, And sway with reason more or less. I own I never really warmed To the reformer or reformed. And yet conversion has its place Not halfway down the scale of grace. So if you find you must repent From side to side in argument, At least don't use your mind too hard, But trust my instinct—I'm a bard.

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#### A MISSIVE MISSILE

Someone in ancient Mas d'Azil
Once took a little pebble wheel
And dotted it with red for me,
And sent it to me years and years—
A million years to be precise—

Across the barrier of ice:	
Two round dots and a ripple streak,	
So vivid as to seem to speak.	
But what imperfectly appears	
is whether the two dots were tears,	10
Two teardrops, one for either eye,	
And the wave line a shaken sigh.	
But no, the color used is red.	
Not tears but drops of blood instead.	
The line must be a jagged blade.	15
The sender must have had to die,	
And wanted someone now to know	
His death was sacrificial-votive.	
So almost clear and yet obscure.	
If only anyone were sure	20
A motive then was still a motive.	
O you who bring this to my hand,	
You are no common messenger	
(Your badge of office is a spade).	
It grieves me to have had you stand	25
So long for nothing. No reply—	
There is no answer, I'm afraid,	
Across the icy barrier	
For my obscure petitioner.	
Suppose his ghost is standing by	30
Importunate to give the hint	
And be successfully conveyed.	
How anyone can fail to see	
Where perfectly in form and tint	
The metaphor, the symbol lies!	35
Why will I not analogize?	
(I do too much in some men's eyes.)	
Oh, slow uncomprehending me,	

Enough to make a spirit moan	
Or rustle in a bush or tree.	40
I have the ocher-written flint,	40
The two dots and the ripple line.	
The meaning of it is unknown,	
Or else I fear entirely mine,	
All modern, nothing ancient in't,	45
Unsatisfying to us each.	.,
Far as we aim our signs to reach,	
Far as we often make them reach,	
Across the soul-from-soul abyss,	
There is an aeon-limit set	50
Beyond which they are doomed to miss.	
Two souls may be too widely met.	
That sad-with-distance river beach	
With mortal longing may beseech;	
It cannot speak as far as this.	55

### A Witness Tree

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#### BEECH

Where my imaginary line
Bends square in woods, an iron spine
And pile of real rocks have been founded.
And off this corner in the wild,
Where these are driven in and piled,
One tree, by being deeply wounded,
Has been impressed as Witness Tree
And made commit to memory
My proof of being not unbounded.
Thus truth's established and borne out,
Though circumstanced with dark and doubt—
Though by a world of doubt surrounded.

—The Moodie Forester

#### **SYCAMORE**

Zaccheus he Did climb the tree Our Lord to see.

—The New England Primer

#### THE SILKEN TENT

She is as in a field a silken tent At midday when a sunny summer breeze Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent, So that in guys it gently sways at ease, And its supporting central cedar pole, That is its pinnacle to heavenward And signifies the sureness of the soul, Seems to owe naught to any single cord, But strictly held by none, is loosely bound By countless silken ties of love and thought To everything on earth the compass round, And only by one's going slightly taut In the capriciousness of summer air Is of the slightest bondage made aware.

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#### ALL REVELATION

A head thrusts in as for the view, But where it is it thrusts in from Or what it is it thrusts into By that Cyb'laean avenue, And what can of its coming come,

And whither it will be withdrawn,
And what take hence or leave behind,
These things the mind has pondered on
A moment and still asking gone.
Strange apparition of the mind!

But the impervious geode Was entered, and its inner crust Of crystals with a ray cathode At every point and facet glowed In answer to the mental thrust.

Eyes seeking the response of eyes Bring out the stars, bring out the flowers, Thus concentrating earth and skies So none need be afraid of size. All revelation has been ours.

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# HAPPINESS MAKES UP IN HEIGHT FOR WHAT IT LACKS IN LENGTH

O stormy, stormy world,	
The days you were not swirled	
Around with mist and cloud,	
Or wrapped as in a shroud,	
And the sun's brilliant ball	5
Was not in part or all	
Obscured from mortal view—	
Were days so very few	
I can but wonder whence	
I get the lasting sense	0
Of so much warmth and light.	
If my mistrust is right	
It may be altogether	
From one day's perfect weather,	
When starting clear at dawn	<b>1</b> 5
The day swept clearly on	
To finish clear at eve.	
I verily believe	
My fair impression may	
Be all from that one day	20
No shadow crossed but ours	
As through its blazing flowers	
We went from house to wood	
For change of solitude.	

#### COME IN

As I came to the edge of the woods, Thrush music—hark! Now if it was dusk outside, Inside it was dark.

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Too dark in the woods for a bird By sleight of wing To better its perch for the night, Though it still could sing.

The last of the light of the sun That had died in the west Still lived for one song more In a thrush's breast.

Far in the pillared dark
Thrush music went—
Almost like a call to come in
To the dark and lament.

But no, I was out for stars: I would not come in.
I meant not even if asked,
And I hadn't been.

#### I COULD GIVE ALL TO TIME

To Time it never seems that he is brave To set himself against the peaks of snow To lay them level with the running wave, Nor is he overjoyed when they lie low, But only grave, contemplative and grave. What now is inland shall be ocean isle, Then eddies playing round a sunken reef Like the curl at the corner of a smile; And I could share Time's lack of joy or grief At such a planetary change of style.

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I could give all to Time except—except
What I myself have held. But why declare
The things forbidden that while the Customs slept
I have crossed to Safety with? For I am There,
And what I would not part with I have kept.

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#### CARPE DIEM

Age saw two quiet children Go loving by at twilight, He knew not whether homeward, Or outward from the village, Or (chimes were ringing) churchward. He waited (they were strangers) Till they were out of hearing To bid them both be happy. "Be happy, happy, happy, And seize the day of pleasure." The age-long theme is Age's. Twas Age imposed on poems Their gather-roses burden To warn against the danger That overtaken lovers From being overflooded With happiness should have it And yet not know they have it. But bid life seize the present?

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It lives less in the present
Than in the future always,
And less in both together
Than in the past. The present
Is too much for the senses,
Too crowding, too confusing—
Too present to imagine.

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#### THE WIND AND THE RAIN

Ι

That far-off day the leaves in flight Were letting in the colder light. A season-ending wind there blew That, as it did the forest strew, I leaned on with a singing trust And let it drive me deathward too. With breaking step I stabbed the dust, Yet did not much to shorten stride. I sang of death—but had I known The many deaths one must have died Before he came to meet his own! Oh, should a child be left unwarned That any song in which he mourned Would be as if he prophesied? It were unworthy of the tongue To let the half of life alone And play the good without the ill. And yet 'twould seem that what is sung In happy sadness by the young, Fate has no choice but to fulfill.

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#### THE MOST OF IT

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He thought he kept the universe alone: For all the voice in answer he could wake Was but the mocking echo of his own From some tree-hidden cliff across the lake. Some morning from the boulder-broken beach He would cry out on life, that what it wants Is not its own love back in copy speech, But counter-love, original response. And nothing ever came of what he cried Unless it was the embodiment that crashed In the cliff's talus on the other side, And then in the far-distant water splashed, But after a time allowed for it to swim. Instead of proving human when it neared And someone else additional to him. As a great buck it powerfully appeared, Pushing the crumpled water up ahead, And landed pouring like a waterfall, And stumbled through the rocks with horny tread, And forced the underbrush—and that was all.

#### NEVER AGAIN WOULD BIRDS' SONG BE THE SAME

He would declare and could himself believe That the birds there in all the garden round From having heard the daylong voice of Eve Had added to their own an oversound, Her tone of meaning but without the words. Admittedly an eloquence so soft Could only have had an influence on birds When call or laughter carried it aloft.
Be that as may be, she was in their song.
Moreover her voice upon their voices crossed
Had now persisted in the woods so long
That probably it never would be lost.
Never again would birds' song be the same.
And to do that to birds was why she came.

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#### THE SUBVERTED FLOWER

She drew back; he was calm: "It is this that had the power." And he lashed his open palm With the tender-headed flower. He smiled for her to smile. 5 But she was either blind Or willfully unkind. He eyed her for a while For a woman and a puzzle. He flicked and flung the flower, 10 And another sort of smile Caught up like fingertips The corners of his lips And cracked his ragged muzzle. She was standing to the waist 15 In goldenrod and brake, Her shining hair displaced. He stretched her either arm As if she made it ache To clasp her—not to harm; 20 As if he could not spare To touch her neck and hair. "If this has come to us

And not to me alone——"	
So she thought she heard him say;	25
Though with every word he spoke	
His lips were sucked and blown	
And the effort made him choke	
Like a tiger at a bone.	
She had to lean away.	30
She dared not stir a foot,	
Lest movement should provoke	
The demon of pursuit	
That slumbers in a brute.	
It was then her mother's call	35
From inside the garden wall	
Made her steal a look of fear	
To see if he could hear	
And would pounce to end it all	
Before her mother came.	40
She looked and saw the shame:	
A hand hung like a paw,	
An arm worked like a saw	
As if to be persuasive,	
An ingratiating laugh	45
That cut the snout in half,	
An eye become evasive.	
A girl could only see	
That a flower had marred a man,	
But what she could not see	50
Was that the flower might be	
Other than base and fetid:	
That the flower had done but part,	
And what the flower began	
Her own too meager heart	55

Had terribly completed. She looked and saw the worst. And the dog or what it was, Obeying bestial laws, A coward save at night, 60 Turned from the place and ran. She heard him stumble first And use his hands in flight. She heard him bark outright. And oh, for one so young 65 The bitter words she spit Like some tenacious bit That will not leave the tongue. She plucked her lips for it, And still the horror clung. 70 Her mother wiped the foam From her chin, picked up her comb, And drew her backward home.

#### WILLFUL HOMING

It is getting dark and time he drew to a house, But the blizzard blinds him to any house ahead. The storm gets down his neck in an icy souse That sucks his breath like a wicked cat in bed.

The snow blows on him and off him, exerting force Downward to make him sit astride a drift, Imprint a saddle, and calmly consider a course. He peers out shrewdly into the thick and swift.

Since he means to come to a door he will come to a door, Although so compromised of aim and rate

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He may fumble wide of the knob a yard or more, And to those concerned he may seem a little late.

#### A CLOUD SHADOW

A breeze discovered my open book And began to flutter the leaves to look For a poem there used to be on Spring. I tried to tell her "There's no such thing!"

For whom would a poem on Spring be by? The breeze disdained to make reply; And a cloud shadow crossed her face For fear I would make her miss the place.

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#### THE QUEST OF THE PURPLE-FRINGED

I felt the chill of the meadow underfoot, But the sun overhead; And snatches of verse and song of scenes like this I sung or said.

I skirted the margin alders for miles and miles In a sweeping line. The day was the day by every flower that blooms, But I saw no sign.

Yet further I went to be before the scythe, For the grass was high; Till I saw the path where the slender fox had come And gone panting by.

Then at last and following him I found— In the very hour

When the color flushed to the petals it must have been— The far-sought flower.	15
There stood the purple spires with no breath of air Nor headlong bee To disturb their perfect poise the livelong day 'Neath the alder tree.	20
I only knelt and putting the boughs aside Looked, or at most Counted them all to the buds in the copse's depth That were pale as a ghost.	
Then I arose and silently wandered home, And I for one Said that the fall might come and whirl of leaves, For summer was done.	25
THE DISCOVERY OF THE MADEIRAS	
A rhyme of Hakluyt	
A stolen lady was coming on board, But whether stolen from her wedded lord Or from her own self against her will Was not set forth in the lading bill.	
A stolen lady was all it said.  She came down weakly and blindly led  To the darkening, windy village slip.  She would not look at the fateful ship.  Her lover to make the ordeal swift	5
Had to give her the final lift And force her farewell step off shore. The way she clung to him the more	10

Seemed to argue perhaps she went

Not entirely without consent. But with no companion of womankind 15 To leave the English law behind And sail for some vague Paphian bourn Began already to seem forlorn. It did more distance up and down, Their little stormy ship, than on. 20 Now it took a fitful run: Now standing cracked its sail and spun; Now stood upon its bulging prow Till the pirate sailors made a vow Of where they would go on pilgrimage 25 If God would spare them to die of age. When the clap of two converging waves Failed to crush their barrel staves Or the wind to snap their walking stick, They laughed as if they had turned a trick. 30 This was no lady's time of year.

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This was no lady's time of year.
For long the lady would disappear,
And might be rolling dead below
For all the crew were let to know.
But when the ocean's worst had passed
She was carried out beside the mast,
Where all day long she lay and dozed.
Or she and her lover would sit opposed
And darkly drink each other's eyes
With faint headshakings, no more wise.
The most he asked her eyes to grant
Was that in what she does not want
A woman wants to be overruled.
Or was the instinct in him fooled?

He knew not, neither of them knew. They could only say like any two, "You tell me and I'll tell you."	45
Sometimes, with her permissive smile,	
He left her to her thoughts awhile	
And went to lean against the rail,	50
And let the captain tell him a tale.	
(He had to keep the captain's favor.)	
The ship it seemed had been a slaver.	
And once they had shipped a captive pair	
Whose love was such they didn't care	55
Who took in them onlooker's share.	
Well, when at length the fever struck	
That spoils the nigger-trader's luck	
The man was among the first it took.	
"Throw him over alive," they said,	60
"Before the thing has time to spread.	
You've got to keep the quarters clean."	
But the girl fought them and made a scene.	
She was a savage jungle cat	
It was easy to be angry at;	65
Which put the thought into someone's head	
Of the ocean bed for a marriage bed.	
Some Tom said to Dick or Harry:	
"Apparently these two ought to marry.	
We get plenty funerals at sea.	70
How for a change would a wedding be?—	
Or a combination of the two,	
How would a funeral-wedding do?	
It's gone so far she's probably caught	
Whatever it is the nigger's got."	75
They bound them naked so they faced	

With a length of cordage about the waist. Many lovers have been divorced By having what is free enforced. But presence of love these had in death 80 To kiss and drink each other's breath Before they were hurled from the slaver's deck. They added clasps about the neck And went embraced to the cold and dark To be their own marriage feast for the shark. 85 When after talk with other men A man comes back to a woman again He tells her as much of blood and dirt As he thinks will do her not too much hurt. "What was the pirate captain's chaff? 90 He laughed but he did not make you laugh. The jest seemed his and the plaudits his. I heard him shout 'What a thing it is!' Some standing jest between you men? Don't tell me if you don't want to, then." 95 Whereat in a moment of cross unruth He thought, All right, if you want the truth! "I don't believe it! It isn't true! ' It never happened! Did it, you?" Seeing no help in wings or feet 100 She withdrew back in self-retreat Till her heart almost ceased to beat. Her spirit faded as far away As the living ever go yet stay. And her thought was she had had her pay. 105 He said to the captain, "Give command, And bring us to the nearest land;

And let us try an untossed place	
And see if it will help her case."	
They brought her to a nameless isle.	110
And the ship lay in the bay for a while	
Waiting to see if she would mend;	
But sailed and left them in the end.	
Her lover saw them sail away,	
But dared not tell her all one day.	115
For slowly even her sense of him	
And love itself were growing dim.	
He no more drew the smile he sought.	
The story is she died of thought.	
And when her lover was left alone	120
He stayed long enough to carve on stone	
The name of the lady with his own	
To be her only marriage lines.	
And carved them round with a scroll of vines.	
Then he gouged a clumsy sailing trough	125
From a fallen tree and pushing off	
Safely made the African shore;	
Where he fell a prisoner to the Moor.	
But the Moor strangely enough believed	
The tale of the voyage he had achieved,	130
And sent him to the King to admire.	
He came at last to his native shire.	
The island he found was verified.	
And the bay where his stolen lady died	
Was named for him instead of her.	135
But so is history like to err.	
And soon it is neither here nor there	
Whether time's rewards are fair or unfair.	

#### THE GIFT OUTRIGHT

The land was ours before we were the land's. She was our land more than a hundred years Before we were her people. She was ours In Massachusetts, in Virginia, But we were England's, still colonials, Possessing what we still were unpossessed by, Possessed by what we now no more possessed. Something we were withholding made us weak Until we found out that it was ourselves We were withholding from our land of living, And forthwith found salvation in surrender. Such as we were we gave ourselves outright (The deed of gift was many deeds of war) To the land vaguely realizing westward, But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced, Such as she was, such as she would become.

#### TRIPLE BRONZE

The Infinite's being so wide Is the reason the Powers provide For inner defense my hide. For next defense outside

I make myself this time Of wood or granite or lime A wall too hard for crime Either to breach or climb.

Then a number of us agree On a national boundary

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And that defense makes three Between too much and me.

#### OUR HOLD ON THE PLANET

We asked for rain. It didn't flash and roar. It didn't lose its temper at our demand And blow a gale. It didn't misunderstand And give us more than our spokesman bargained for; And just because we owned to a wish for rain, Send us a flood and bid us be damned and drown. It gently threw us a glittering shower down. And when we had taken that into the roots of grain, It threw us another and then another still. Till the spongy soil again was natal wet. We may doubt the just proportion of good to ill. There is much in nature against us. But we forget: Take nature altogether since time began, Including human nature, in peace and war, And it must be a little more in favor of man, Say a fraction of one percent at the very least, Or our number living wouldn't be steadily more, Our hold on the planet wouldn't have so increased.

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#### TO A YOUNG WRETCH

(Boethian)

As gay for you to take your father's ax
As take his gun—rod—to go hunting—fishing.
You nick my spruce until its fiber cracks,
It gives up standing straight and goes down swishing.
You link an arm in its arm and you lean
Across the light snow homeward smelling green.

I could have bought you just as good a tree
To frizzle resin in a candle flame,
And what a saving 'twould have meant to me.
But tree by charity is not the same
As tree by enterprise and expedition.
I must not spoil your Christmas with contrition.

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It is your Christmases against my woods. But even where, thus, opposing interests kill, They are to be thought of as opposing goods Oftener than as conflicting good and ill; Which makes the war god seem no special dunce For always fighting on both sides at once.

And though in tinsel chain and popcorn rope My tree, a captive in your window bay, Has lost its footing on my mountain slope And lost the stars of heaven, may, oh, may The symbol star it lifts against your ceiling Help me accept its fate with Christmas feeling.

#### THE LESSON FOR TODAY

If this uncertain age in which we dwell Were really as dark as I hear sages tell, And I convinced that they were really sages, I should not curse myself with it to hell, But leaving not the chair I long have sat in I should betake me back ten thousand pages To the world's undebatably dark ages, And getting up my medieval Latin, Seek converse common cause and brotherhood (By all that's liberal—I should, I should)

With poets who could calmly take the fate
Of being born at once too early and late,
And for these reasons kept from being great.
Yet singing but Dione in the wood
And ver aspergit terram floribus
They slowly led old Latin verse to rhyme
And to forget the ancient lengths of time,
And so began the modern world for us.

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I'd say, O Master of the Palace School, You were not Charles' nor anybody's fool: Tell me as pedagogue to pedagogue, You did not know that since King Charles did rule You had no chance but to be minor, did you? Your light was spent perhaps as in a fog That at once kept you burning low and hid you. The age may very well have been to blame For your not having won to Virgil's fame. But no one ever heard you make the claim. You would not think you knew enough to judge The age when full upon you. That's my point. We have today and I could call their name Who know exactly what is out of joint To make their verse and their excuses lame. They've tried to grasp with too much social fact Too large a situation. You and I Would be afraid if we should comprehend And get outside of too much bad statistics, Our muscles never could again contract: We never could recover human shape, But must live lives out mentally agape Or die of philosophical distention. That's how we feel—and we're no special mystics.

We can't appraise the time in which we act. But for the folly of it, let's pretend We know enough to know it for adverse. 45 One more millennium's about to end. Let's celebrate the event, my distant friend. In publicly disputing which is worse, The present age or your age. You and I As schoolmen of repute should qualify 50 To wage a fine scholastical contention As to whose age deserves the lower mark, Or should I say the higher one, for dark. I can just hear the way you make it go: There's always something to be sorry for, 55 A sordid peace or an outrageous war. Yes, yes, of course. We have the same convention. The groundwork of all faith is human woe. It was well worth preliminary mention. There's nothing but injustice to be had, 60 No choice is left a poet, you might add, But how to take the curse, tragic or comic. It was well worth preliminary mention. But let's go on to where our cases part, If part they do. Let me propose a start. 65 (We're rivals in the badness of our case, Remember, and must keep a solemn face.) Space ails us moderns: we are sick with space. Its contemplation makes us out as small As a brief epidemic of microbes 70 That in a good glass may be seen to crawl The patina of this the least of globes. But have we there the advantage after all? You were belittled into vilest worms 75 God hardly tolerated with his feet;

Which comes to the same thing in different terms. We both are the belittled human race, One as compared with God and one with space. I had thought ours the more profound disgrace; But doubtless this was only my conceit. The cloister and the observatory saint Take comfort in about the same complaint. So science and religion really meet.

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I can just hear you call your Palace class: Come learn the Latin eheu for alas. You may not want to use it and you may. O paladins, the lesson for today Is how to be unhappy yet polite. And at the summons Roland, Olivier, And every sheepish paladin and peer, Being already more than proved in fight, Sits down in school to try if he can write Like Horace in the true Horatian vein, Yet like a Christian disciplined to bend His mind to thinking always of the end. Memento mori and obey the Lord. Art and religion love the somber chord. Earth's a hard place in which to save the soul, And could it be brought under state control, So automatically we all were saved, Its separateness from Heaven could be waived; It might as well at once be kingdom-come. (Perhaps it will be next millennium.)

But these are universals, not confined To any one time, place, or human kind. We're either nothing or a God's regret.

As ever when philosophers are met, No matter where they stoutly mean to get, Nor what particulars they reason from, They are philosophers, and from old habit They end up in the universal Whole As unoriginal as any rabbit.

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One age is like another for the soul.

I'm telling you. You haven't said a thing,
Unless I put it in your mouth to say.

I'm having the whole argument my way—
But in your favor—please to tell your King—
In having granted you all ages shine
With equal darkness, yours as dark as mine.
I'm liberal. You, you aristocrat,
Won't know exactly what I mean by that.
I mean so altruistically moral
I never take my own side in a quarrel.
I'd lay my hand on his hand on his staff,
Lean back and have my confidential laugh,
And tell him I had read his Epitaph.

It sent me to the graves the other day.

The only other there was far away

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Across the landscape with a watering pot
At his devotions in a special plot.
And he was there resuscitating flowers
(Make no mistake about its being bones);
But I was only there to read the stones
To see what on the whole they had to say
About how long a man may think to live,

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Which is becoming my concern of late. And very wide the choice they seemed to give;

The ages ranging all the way from hours To months and years and many, many years.	140
One man had lived one hundred years and eight. But though we all may be inclined to wait	140
And follow some development of state,	
Or see what comes of science and invention,	
There is a limit to our time extension.	
We all are doomed to broken-off careers,	145
And so's the nation, so's the total race.	
The earth itself is liable to the fate	
Of meaninglessly being broken off.	
(And hence so many literary tears	
At which my inclination is to scoff.)	150
I may have wept that any should have died	
Or missed their chance, or not have been their best,	
Or been their riches, fame, or love denied;	
On me as much as any is the jest.	
I take my incompleteness with the rest.	155
God bless himself can no one else be blessed.	
I hold your doctrine of <i>Memento Mori</i> . And were an epitaph to be my story	

I hold your doctrine of *Memento Mori*.

And were an epitaph to be my story
I'd have a short one ready for my own.
I would have written of me on my stone:
I had a lover's quarrel with the world.

## TIME OUT

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It took that pause to make him realize
The mountain he was climbing had the slant
As of a book held up before his eyes
(And was a text albeit done in plant).
Dwarf cornel, goldthread, and Maianthemum,

He followingly fingered as he read,
The flowers fading on the seed to come;
But the thing was the slope it gave his head:
The same for reading as it was for thought,
So different from the hard and level stare
Of enemies defied and battles fought.
It was the obstinately gentle air
That may be clamored at by cause and sect,
But it will have its moment to reflect.

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## TO A MOTH SEEN IN WINTER

Here's first a gloveless hand warm from my pocket, A perch and resting place 'twixt wood and wood, Bright-black-eyed silvery creature, brushed with brown, The wings not folded in repose, but spread. (Who would you be, I wonder, by those marks If I had moths to friend as I have flowers?) And now pray tell what lured you with false hope To make the venture of eternity And seek the love of kind in wintertime? But stay and hear me out. I surely think You make a labor of flight for one so airy, Spending yourself too much in self-support. Nor will you find love either, nor love you. And what I pity in you is something human, The old incurable untimeliness. Only begetter of all ills that are. But go. You are right. My pity cannot help. Go till you wet your pinions and are quenched. You must be made more simply wise than I To know the hand I stretch impulsively Across the gulf of well-nigh everything

The Muse mourns one who went to his retreat Long since in some abysmal city street, The bride who shared the crust he broke to eat, As grave as he about the world's defeat.

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With such it has proved dangerous as friend Even in a playful moment to contend That the millennium to which you bend In longing is not at a progress-end

By grace of state-manipulated pelf, Or politics of Ghibelline or Guelph, But right beside you booklike on a shelf, Or even better godlike in yourself.

He trusts my love too well to deign reply. But there is in the sadness of his eye Something about a kingdom in the sky (As yet unbrought to earth) he means to try.

## **NOVEMBER**

We saw leaves go to glory,
Then almost migratory
Go part way down the lane,
And then to end the story
Get beaten down and pasted
In one wild day of rain.
We heard "'Tis over" roaring.
A year of leaves was wasted.
Oh, we make a boast of storing,
Of saving and of keeping,
But only by ignoring
The waste of moments sleeping,

The waste of pleasure weeping, By denying and ignoring The waste of nations warring.

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#### THE RABBIT-HUNTER

Careless and still The hunter lurks With gun depressed, Facing alone The alder swamps Ghastly snow-white. And his hound works In the offing there Like one possessed, And yelps delight And sings and romps, Bringing him on The shadowy hare For him to rend And deal a death That he nor it (Nor I) have wit To comprehend.

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## A LOOSE MOUNTAIN

(Telescopic)

Did you stay up last night (the Magi did)
To see the star shower known as Leonid
That once a year by hand or apparatus
Is so mysteriously pelted at us?
It is but fiery puffs of dust and pebbles,

No doubt directed at our heads as rebels In having taken artificial light Against the ancient sovereignty of night. A fusillade of blanks and empty flashes, It never reaches earth except as ashes 10 Of which you feel no least touch on your face Nor find in dew the slightest cloudy trace. Nevertheless it constitutes a hint That the loose mountain lately seen to glint In sunlight near us in momentous swing 15 Is something in a Balearic sling The heartless and enormous Outer Black Is still withholding in the Zodiac But from irresolution in his back About when best to have us in our orbit. 20 So we won't simply take it and absorb it.

## IT IS ALMOST THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND

To start the world of old
We had one age of gold
Not labored out of mines,
And some say there are signs
The second such has come,
The true Millennium,
The final golden glow
To end it. And if so
(And science ought to know)
We well may raise our heads
From weeding garden beds
And annotating books
To watch this end deluxe.

#### IN A POEM

The sentencing goes blithely on its way And takes the playfully objected rhyme As surely as it keeps the stroke and time In having its undeviable say.

## ON OUR SYMPATHY WITH THE UNDER DOG

First under up and then again down under, We watch a circus of revolving dogs No senator dares in to kick asunder, Lest both should bite him in the toga-togs.

## A QUESTION

A voice said, Look me in the stars And tell me truly, men of earth, If all the soul-and-body scars Were not too much to pay for birth.

## **BOEOTIAN**

I love to toy with the Platonic notion That wisdom need not be of Athens Attic, But well may be Laconic, even Boeotian. At least I will not have it systematic.

## THE SECRET SITS

We dance round in a ring and suppose, But the Secret sits in the middle and knows.

## AN EQUALIZER

It is as true as Caesar's name was Kaiser
That no economist was ever wiser
(Though prodigal himself and a despiser
Of capital, and calling thrift a miser).
And when we get too far apart in wealth,
'Twas his idea that for the public health,
So that the poor won't have to steal by stealth,
We now and then should take an equalizer.

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#### A SEMI-REVOLUTION

I advocate a semi-revolution.
The trouble with a total revolution
(Ask any reputable Rosicrucian)
Is that it brings the same class up on top.
Executives of skillful execution
Will therefore plan to go halfway and stop.
Yes, revolutions are the only salves,
But they're one thing that should be done by halves.

## **ASSURANCE**

The danger not an inch outside Behind the porthole's slab of glass And double ring of fitted brass I trust feels properly defied.

## AN ANSWER

But Islands of the Blessèd, bless you, son, I never came upon a blessèd one.

#### **TRESPASS**

No, I had set no prohibiting sign, And yes, my land was hardly fenced. Nevertheless the land was mine: I was being trespassed on and against.

Whoever the surly freedom took Of such an unaccountable stay Busying by my woods and brook Gave me a strangely restless day.

He might be opening leaves of stone, The picture book of the trilobite, For which the region round was known, And in which there was little property right. 5

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Twas not the value I stood to lose In specimen crab in specimen rock, But his ignoring what was whose That made me look again at the clock.

Then came his little acknowledgment: He asked for a drink at the kitchen door, An errand he may have had to invent, But it made my property mine once more.

## A NATURE NOTE

Four or five whippoorwills
Have come down from their native ledge
To the open country edge
To give us a piece of their bills.

Two in June were a pair—You'd say sufficiently loud, But this was a family crowd, A full-fledged family affair.

All out of time pell-mell!

I wasn't in on the joke,

Unless it was coming to folk

To bid us a mock farewell.

I took note of when it occurred, The twenty-third of September, Their latest that I remember, September the twenty-third.

## OF THE STONES OF THE PLACE

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I farm a pasture where the boulders lie As touching as a basketful of eggs, And though they're nothing anybody begs, I wonder if it wouldn't signify

For me to send you one out where you live In wind-soil to a depth of thirty feet, And every acre good enough to eat, As fine as flour put through a baker's sieve.

I'd ship a smooth one you could slap and chafe, And set up like a statue in your yard, An eolith palladium to guard The West and keep the old tradition safe.

Carve nothing on it. You can simply say In self-defense to quizzical inquiry:

"The portrait of the soul of my Gransir Ira. It came from where he came from anyway."

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## NOT OF SCHOOL AGE

Around bend after bend,
It was blown woods and no end.
I came to but one house,
I made but the one friend.

At the one house a child was out Who drew back at first in doubt, But spoke to me in a gale That blew so he had to shout.

His cheek smeared with apple sand, A part apple in his hand, He pointed on up the road As one having war-command.

A parent, his gentler one, Looked forth on her small son And wondered with me there What now was being done.

His accent was not good. But I slowly understood. Something where I could go— He couldn't but I could.

He was too young to go, Not over four or so. Well, would I please go to school, And the big flag they had—you know

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The big flag: the red—white— And blue flag, the great sight— He bet it was out today, And would I see if he was right?

## A SERIOUS STEP LIGHTLY TAKEN

Between two burrs on the map Was a hollow-headed snake. The burrs were hills, the snake was a stream, And the hollow head was a lake.

And the dot in *front* of a name Was what should be a town.
And there might be a house we could buy For only a dollar down.

With two wheels low in the ditch
We left our boiling car
And knocked at the door of a house we found,
And there today we are.

It is turning three hundred years On our cisatlantic shore For family after family name. We'll make it three hundred more

For our name farming here, Aloof yet not aloof, Enriching soil and increasing stock, Repairing fence and roof;

A hundred thousand days Of front-page paper events, A half a dozen major wars, And forty-five presidents.

## THE LITERATE FARMER AND THE PLANET VENUS

A dated popular-science medley on a mysterious light recently observed in the western sky at evening

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My unexpected knocking at the door Started chairs thundering on the kitchen floor, Knives and forks ringing on the supper plates, Voices conflicting like the candidates. A mighty farmer flung the house door wide, He and a lot of children came outside, And there on an equality we stood. That's the time knocking at a door did good.

"I stopped to compliment you on this star
You get the beauty of from where you are.
To see it so, the bright and only one
In sunset light, you'd think it was the sun
That hadn't sunk the way it should have sunk,
But right in heaven was slowly being shrunk
So small as to be virtually gone,
Yet there to watch the darkness coming on—
Like someone dead permitted to exist
Enough to see if he was greatly missed.
I didn't see the sun set. Did it set?
Will anybody swear that isn't it?
And will you give me shelter for the night?
If not, a glass of milk will be all right."

"Traveler, I'm glad you asked about that light.

Your mind mistrusted there was something wrong,	
And naturally you couldn't go along	25
Without inquiring if 'twas serious.	
"Twas providential you applied to us,	
Who were just on the subject when you came.	
There is a star that's Serious by name	
And nature too, but this is not the same.	30
This light's been going on for several years,	
Although at times we think it disappears.	
You'll hear all sorts of things. You'll meet with them	
Will tell you it's the star of Bethlehem	
Above some more religion in a manger.	35
But put that down to superstition, Stranger.	
What's a star doing big as a baseball?	
Between us two it's not a star at all.	
It's a new patented electric light,	
Put up on trial by that Jerseyite	40
So much is being now expected of,	
To give developments the final shove	
And turn us into the next specie folks	
Are going to be, unless these monkey jokes	
Of the last fifty years are all a libel,	45
And Darwin's proved mistaken, not the Bible.	
I s'pose you have your notions on the vexed	
Question of what we're turning into next."	
"As liberals we're willing to give place	
To any demonstrably better race,	50
No matter what the color of its skin.	,
(But what a human race the white has been!)	
I heard a fellow in a public lecture On Pueblo Indians and their architecture	
Declare that if such Indians inherited	55
Declare that if such indians inhelited	22

The condemned world the legacy was merited. So far as he, the speaker, was concerned He had his ticket bought, his passage earned, To take the *Mayflower* back where he belonged, Before the Indian race was further wronged. But come, enlightened as in talk you seem, You don't believe that that first-water gleam Is not a star?"

"Believe it? Why, I know it.

Its actions any cloudless night will show it.

You'll see it be allowed up just so high,
Say about halfway up the western sky,
And then get slowly, slowly pulled back down.

You might not notice if you've lived in town,
As I suspect you have. A town debars

Much notice of what's going on in stars.

The idea is no doubt to make one job

Of lighting the whole night with one big blob

Of electricity in bulk the way

The sun sets the example in the day."

"Here come more stars to character the skies,
And they in the estimation of the wise
Are more divine than any bulb or arc,
Because their purpose is to flash and spark,
But not to take away the precious dark.
We need the interruption of the night
To ease attention off when overtight,
To break our logic in too long a flight,
And ask us if our premises are right."

"Sick talk, sick talk, sick sentimental talk! It doesn't do you any good to talk. I see what *you* are: can't get you excited

With hopes of getting mankind unbenighted. Some ignorance takes rank as innocence. Have it for all of me and have it dense. The slave will never thank his manumitter; Which often makes the manumitter bitter."	90
"In short, you think that star a patent medicine Put up to cure the world by Mr. Edison."	
"You said it—that's exactly what it is.  My son in Jersey says a friend of his  Knows the old man, and nobody's so deep	95
In incandescent lamps and ending sleep. The old man argues science cheapened speed. A good cheap anti-dark is now the need.	
Give us a good cheap twenty-four-hour day, No part of which we'd have to waste, I say,	100
And who knows where we can't get! Wasting time In sleep or slowness is the deadly crime. He gave up sleep himself some time ago,	
It puffs the face and brutalizes so. You take the ugliness all so much dread,	105
Called getting out of the wrong side of bed.  That is the source perhaps of human hate  And well may be where wars originate.	
Get rid of that and there'd be left no great Of either murder or war in any land.	110
You know how cunningly mankind is planned: We have one loving and one hating hand.	
The loving's made to hold each other like, While with the hating other hand we strike.	115
The blow can be no stronger than the clutch, Or soon we'd bat each other out of touch,	

And the fray wouldn't last a single round.

And still it's bad enough to badly wound,	
And if our getting up to start the day	120
On the right side of bed would end the fray,	
We'd hail the remedy. But it's been tried	
And found, he says, a bed has no right side.	
The trouble is, with that receipt for love,	
A bed's got no right side to get out of.	125
We can't be trusted to the sleep we take,	
And simply must evolve to stay awake.	
He thinks that chairs and tables will endure,	
But beds—in less than fifty years he's sure	
There will be no such piece of furniture.	130
He's surely got it in for cots and beds.	
No need for us to rack our common heads	
About it, though. We haven't got the mind.	
It best be left to great men of his kind	
Who have no other object than our good.	135
There's a lot yet that isn't understood.	
Ain't it a caution to us not to fix	
No limits to what rose in rubbing sticks	
On fire to scare away the pterodix	
When man first lived in caves along the creeks?"	140

"Marvelous world in nineteen-twenty-six."

# Steeple Bush

: 1947 :

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## DATE LOANED

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## A YOUNG BIRCH

The birch begins to crack its outer sheath Of baby green and show the white beneath, As whosoever likes the young and slight May well have noticed. Soon entirely white To double day and cut in half the dark 5 It will stand forth, entirely white in bark, And nothing but the top a leafy green-The only native tree that dares to lean, Relying on its beauty, to the air. (Less brave perhaps than trusting are the fair.) 10 And someone reminiscent will recall How once in cutting brush along the wall He spared it from the number of the slain, At first to be no bigger than a cane, And then no bigger than a fishing pole, 15 But now at last so obvious a bole The most efficient help you ever hired Would know that it was there to be admired. And zeal would not be thanked that cut it down When you were reading books or out of town. 20 It was a thing of beauty and was sent To live its life out as an ornament.

## SOMETHING FOR HOPE

At the present rate it must come to pass, And that right soon, that the meadowsweet And steeple bush, not good to eat, Will have crowded out the edible grass.

Then all there is to do is wait For maple, birch, and spruce to push Through meadowsweet and steeple bush And crowd them out at a similar rate.

No plow among these rocks would pay. So busy yourself with other things While the trees put on their wooden rings And with long-sleeved branches hold their sway.

Then cut down the trees when lumber grown, And there's your pristine earth all freed From lovely blooming but wasteful weed And ready again for the grass to own.

A cycle we'll say of a hundred years. Thus foresight does it and laissez-faire, A virtue in which we all may share Unless a government interferes.

Patience and looking away ahead, And leaving some things to take their course. Hope may not nourish a cow or horse, But spes alit agricolam 'tis said.

## ONE STEP BACKWARD TAKEN

Not only sands and gravels Were once more on their travels, But gulping muddy gallons Great boulders off their balance Bumped heads together dully 5

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And started down the gully. Whole capes caked off in slices. I felt my standpoint shaken In the universal crisis. But with one step backward taken 10 I saved myself from going. A world torn loose went by me. Then the rain stopped and the blowing, And the sun came out to dry me.

## DIRECTIVE

Back out of all this now too much for us, Back in a time made simple by the loss Of detail, burned, dissolved, and broken off Like graveyard marble sculpture in the weather, There is a house that is no more a house Upon a farm that is no more a farm And in a town that is no more a town. The road there, if you'll let a guide direct you Who only has at heart your getting lost, May seem as if it should have been a quarry— 10 Great monolithic knees the former town Long since gave up pretense of keeping covered. And there's a story in a book about it: Besides the wear of iron wagon wheels The ledges show lines ruled southeast-northwest, 15 The chisel work of an enormous Glacier That braced his feet against the Arctic Pole. You must not mind a certain coolness from him Still said to haunt this side of Panther Mountain. Nor need you mind the serial ordeal

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Of being watched from forty cellar holes As if by eye pairs out of forty firkins. As for the woods' excitement over you That sends light rustle rushes to their leaves, Charge that to upstart inexperience. 25 Where were they all not twenty years ago? They think too much of having shaded out A few old pecker-fretted apple trees. Make yourself up a cheering song of how Someone's road home from work this once was. 30 Who may be just ahead of you on foot Or creaking with a buggy load of grain. The height of the adventure is the height Of country where two village cultures faded Into each other. Both of them are lost. 35 And if you're lost enough to find yourself By now, pull in your ladder road behind you And put a sign up CLOSED to all but me. Then make yourself at home. The only field Now left's no bigger than a harness gall. 40 First there's the children's house of make-believe, Some shattered dishes underneath a pine, The playthings in the playhouse of the children. Weep for what little things could make them glad. Then for the house that is no more a house, 45 But only a belilaced cellar hole, Now slowly closing like a dent in dough. This was no playhouse but a house in earnest. Your destination and your destiny's A brook that was the water of the house, 50 Cold as a spring as yet so near its source, Too lofty and original to rage. (We know the valley streams that when aroused

Will leave their tatters hung on barb and thorn.)

I have kept hidden in the instep arch
Of an old cedar at the waterside
A broken drinking goblet like the Grail
Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,
So can't get saved, as Saint Mark says they mustn't.
(I stole the goblet from the children's playhouse.)
Here are your waters and your watering place.
Drink and be whole again beyond confusion.

## TOO ANXIOUS FOR RIVERS

Look down the long valley and there stands a mountain That someone has said is the end of the world. Then what of this river that having arisen Must find where to pour itself into and empty? I never saw so much swift water run cloudless. 5 Oh, I have been often too anxious for rivers To leave it to them to get out of their valleys. The truth is the river flows into the canyon Of Ceasing-to-Question-What-Doesn't-Concern-Us, As sooner or later we have to cease somewhere. 10 No place to get lost like too far in the distance. It may be a mercy the dark closes round us So broodingly soon in every direction. The world as we know is an elephant's howdah; The elephant stands on the back of a turtle; 15 The turtle in turn on a rock in the ocean. And how much longer a story has science Before she must put out the light on the children And tell them the rest of the story is dreaming? "You children may dream it and tell it tomorrow." 20 Time was we were molten, time was we were vapor. What set us on fire and what set us revolving, Lucretius the Epicurean might tell us 'Twas something we knew all about to begin with And needn't have fared into space like his master To find 'twas the effort, the essay of love.

## AN UNSTAMPED LETTER IN OUR RURAL LETTER BOX

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Last night your watchdog barked all night, So once you rose and lit the light. It wasn't someone at your locks. No, in your rural letter box I leave this note without a stamp To tell you it was just a tramp Who used your pasture for a camp. There, pointed like the pip of spades, The young spruce made a suite of glades So regular that in the dark The place was like a city park. There I elected to demur Beneath a low-slung juniper That like a blanket to my chin Kept some dew out and some heat in, Yet left me freely face to face All night with universal space. It may have been at two o'clock That under me a point of rock Developed in the grass and fern, And as I woke afraid to turn

Or so much as uncross my feet,	
Lest having wasted precious heat	
I never should again be warmed,	
The largest firedrop ever formed	25
From two stars' having coalesced	
Went streaking molten down the west.	
And then your tramp astrologer	
From seeing this undoubted stir	
In Heaven's firm-set firmament,	30
Himself had the equivalent,	
Only within. Inside the brain	
Two memories that long had lain	
Now quivered toward each other, lipped	
Together, and together slipped;	35
And for a moment all was plain	
That men have thought about in vain.	
Please, my involuntary host,	
Forgive me if I seem to boast.	
'Tis possible you may have seen,	40
Albeit through a rusty screen,	
The same sign Heaven showed your guest.	
Each knows his own discernment best.	
You have had your advantages.	
Things must have happened to you, yes,	45
And have occurred to you no doubt,	
If not indeed from sleeping out,	
Then from the work you went about	
In farming well—or pretty well.	
And it is partly to compel	50
Myself, in forma pauperis,	
To say as much I write you this.	

## TO AN ANCIENT

Your claims to immortality were two. The one you made, the other one you grew. Sorry to have no name for you but You.

We never knew exactly where to look, But found one in the delta of a brook, One in a cavern where you used to cook.

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Coming on such an ancient human trace Seems as expressive of the human race As meeting someone living, face to face.

We date you by your depth in silt and dust Your probable brute nature is discussed. At which point we are totally nonplussed.

You made the eolith, you grew the bone, The second more peculiarly your own, And likely to have been enough alone.

You make me ask if I would go to time Would I gain anything by using rhyme? Or aren't the bones enough I live to lime?

### FIVE NOCTURNES

## I. THE NIGHT LIGHT

She always had to burn a light Beside her attic bed at night. It gave bad dreams and broken sleep, But helped the Lord her soul to keep. Good gloom on her was thrown away. It is on me by night or day, Who have, as I suppose, ahead The darkest of it still to dread. 5

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## II. WERE I IN TROUBLE

Where I could think of no thoroughfare,
Away on the mountain up far too high,
A blinding headlight shifted glare
And began to bounce down a granite stair,
Like a star fresh fallen out of the sky.
And I away in my opposite wood
Am touched by that unintimate light
And made feel less alone than I rightly should,
For traveler there could do me no good
Were I in trouble with night tonight.

## III. BRAVADO

Have I not walked without an upward look
Of caution under stars that very well
Might not have missed me when they shot and fell?
It was a risk I had to take—and took.

## IV. ON MAKING CERTAIN ANYTHING HAS HAPPENED

I could be worse employed Than as watcher of the void, Whose part should be to tell What star if any fell.

Suppose some seed-pearl sun 5 Should be the only one; Yet still I must report Some cluster one star short. I should justly hesitate To frighten church or state 10 By announcing a star down From, say, the Cross or Crown. To make sure what star I missed I should have to check on my list Every star in sight. 15 It might take me all night. IN THE LONG NIGHT I would build my house of crystal, With a solitary friend, Where the cold cracks like a pistol And the needle stands on end. We would pour oil on the ingle 5 And for want of books recite. We would crawl out filing single To observe the Northern Light. If Etookashoo and Couldlooktoo The Esquimaux should call, 10 There would be fish raw and cooked too

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And enough drink oil for all.

As one rankly warm insider To another I would say,

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## A MOOD APART

Once down on my knees to growing plants I prodded the earth with a lazy tool In time with a medley of sotto chants; But becoming aware of some boys from school Who had stopped outside the fence to spy, I stopped my song and almost heart, For any eye is an evil eye That looks in onto a mood apart.

#### THE FEAR OF GOD

If you should rise from Nowhere up to Somewhere, From being No one up to being Someone, Be sure to keep repeating to yourself You owe it to an arbitrary god Whose mercy to you rather than to others Won't bear too critical examination. Stay unassuming. If for lack of license To wear the uniform of who you are, You should be tempted to make up for it In a subordinating look or tone, Beware of coming too much to the surface And using for apparel what was meant To be the curtain of the inmost soul.

## THE FEAR OF MAN

As a girl no one gallantly attends Sets forth for home at midnight from a friend's-She tries to make it in one catch of breath, And this is not because she thinks of death. The city seems in-toppling from a height, But she can trust it not to fall tonight. (It will be taken down before it falls.) There scarcely is a light in all its walls, Except beside a safe inside a bank (For which assurance Mammon is to thank). But there are little streetlights she should trust. So jewel-steady in the wind and dust. Her fear is being spoken by the rude And having her exposure misconstrued. May I in my brief bolt across the scene Not be misunderstood in what I mean.

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## A STEEPLE ON THE HOUSE

What if it should turn out eternity
Was but the steeple on our house of life
That made our house of life a house of worship?
We do not go up there to sleep at night.
We do not go up there to live by day.
Nor need we ever go up there to live.
A spire and belfry coming on the roof
Means that a soul is coming on the flesh.

## INNATE HELIUM

Religious faith is a most filling vapor. It swirls occluded in us under tight

Compression to uplift us out of weight— As in those buoyant bird bones thin as paper, To give them still more buoyancy in flight. Some gas like helium must be innate.

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## THE COURAGE TO BE NEW

I hear the world reciting
The mistakes of ancient men,
The brutality and fighting
They will never have again.

Heartbroken and disabled In body and in mind, They renew talk of the fabled Federation of Mankind.

But they're blessed with the acumen To suspect the human trait Was not the basest human That made them militate.

They will tell you more as soon as You tell them what to do With their ever breaking newness And their courage to be new.

## IOTA SUBSCRIPT

Seek not in me the big I capital, Nor yet the little dotted in me seek. If I have in me any I at all, "Tis the iota subscript of the Greek. So small am I as an attention beggar. The letter you will find me subscript to Is neither alpha, eta, nor omega, But upsilon which is the Greek for you.

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## THE MIDDLENESS OF THE ROAD

The road at the top of the rise Seems to come to an end And take off into the skies. So at the distant bend

It seems to go into a wood, The place of standing still As long the trees have stood. But say what Fancy will,

The mineral drops that explode To drive my ton of car Are limited to the road. They deal with near and far,

But have almost nothing to do With the absolute flight and rest The universal blue And local green suggest.

## **ASTROMETAPHYSICAL**

Lord, I have loved Your sky, Be it said against or for me, Have loved it clear and high, Or low and stormy;

Till I have reeled and stumbled From looking up too much, And fallen and been humbled To wear a crutch.	5
My love for every Heaven O'er which You, Lord, have lorded, From number One to Seven, Should be rewarded.	
It may not give me hope That when I am translated My scalp will in the cope Be constellated.	15
But if that seems to tend To my undue renown, At least it ought to send Me up, not down.	20
SKEPTIC	
Far star that tickles for me my sensitive plate And fries a couple of ebon atoms white, I don't believe I believe a thing you state. I put no faith in the seeming facts of light.	
I don't believe I believe you're the last in space, I don't believe you're anywhere near the last, I don't believe what makes you red in the face Is after explosion going away so fast.	5
The universe may or may not be very immense. As a matter of fact there are times when I am ant	10

To feel it close in tight against my sense Like a caul in which I was born and still am wrapped.

## TWO LEADING LIGHTS

I never happened to contrast The two in the celestial cast Whose prominence has been so vast. The Sun is satisfied with days. He never has in any phase That I have heard of shone at night. And yet he is a power of light And could in one burst overwhelm And davify the darkest realm By right of eminent domain. He has the greatness to refrain. The Moon for all her light and grace Has never learned to know her place. The notedest astronomers Have set the dark aside for hers. But there are many nights, though clear, She doesn't bother to appear. Some lunatic or lunar whim Will bring her out, diminished dim, To set herself beside the Sun. As Sheba came to Solomon. It may be charitably guessed Comparison is not her quest. Some rumor of his wishing ring That changes winter into spring Has brought her merely visiting, An irresponsible divinity Presuming on her femininity.

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## A ROGERS GROUP

How young and unassuming They waited in the street, With babies in their arms And baggage at their feet.

A trolley car they hailed Went by with clanging gong Before they guessed the corner They waited on was wrong.

And no one told them so By way of traveler's aid, No one was so far touched By the Rogers Group they made.

## ON BEING IDOLIZED

The wave sucks back and with the last of water It wraps a wisp of seaweed round my legs, And with the swift rush of its sandy dregs So undermines my barefoot stand I totter, And did I not take steps would be tipped over Like the ideal of some mistaken lover.

#### A WISH TO COMPLY

Did I see it go by,
That Millikan mote?
Well, I said that I did.
I made a good try.
But I'm no one to quote.

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If I have a defect It's a wish to comply And see as I'm bid. I rather suspect All I saw was the lid Going over my eye. I honestly think All I saw was a wink.

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#### A CLIFF DWELLING

There sandy seems the golden sky
And golden seems the sandy plain.
No habitation meets the eye
Unless in the horizon rim,
Some halfway up the limestone wall,
That spot of black is not a stain
Or shadow, but a cavern hole,
Where someone used to climb and crawl
To rest from his besetting fears.
I see the callus on his sole,
The disappearing last of him
And of his race starvation slim,
Oh, years ago—ten thousand years.

#### IT BIDS PRETTY FAIR

The play seems out for an almost infinite run.

Don't mind a little thing like the actors fighting.

The only thing I worry about is the sun.

We'll be all right if nothing goes wrong with the lighting.

#### BEYOND WORDS

That row of icicles along the gutter Feels like my armory of hate; And you, you . . . you, you utter. . . . You wait!

#### A CASE FOR JEFFERSON

Harrison loves my country too,
But wants it all made over new.
He's Freudian Viennese by night.
By day he's Marxian Muscovite.
It isn't because he's Russian Jew.
He's Puritan Yankee through and through.
He dotes on Saturday pork and beans.
But his mind is hardly out of his teens:
With him the love of country means
Blowing it all to smithereens
And having it all made over new.

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LUCRETIUS VERSUS THE LAKE POETS

"Nature I loved; and next to Nature, Art."

Dean, adult education may seem silly.

What of it, though? I got some willy-nilly
The other evening at your college deanery.
And grateful for it (let's not be facetious!)
For I thought Epicurus and Lucretius
By Nature meant the Whole Goddam Machinery.
But you say that in college nomenclature
The only meaning possible for Nature
In Landor's quatrain would be Pretty Scenery.

Which makes opposing it to Art absurd I grant you—if you're sure about the word. God bless the Dean and make his deanship plenary.

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#### HAEC FABULA DOCET

A Blindman by the name of La Fontaine. Relying on himself and on his cane, Came tap-tap-tapping down the village street, The apogee of human blind conceit. Now just ahead of him was seen to yawn A trench where water pipes were laying on. The Blindman might have found it with his ferrule, But someone overanxious at his peril Not only warned him with a loud command But ran against him with a staying hand. Enraged at what he could but think officious, The Blindman missed him with a blow so vicious He gave his own poor iliac a wrench And plunged himself head foremost in the trench: Where with a glee no less for being grim The workmen all turned to and buried him.

#### Moral

The moral is, it hardly need be shown, All those who try to go it sole alone, Too proud to be beholden for relief, Are absolutely sure to come to grief.

#### **ETHEREALIZING**

A theory if you hold it hard enough And long enough gets rated as a creed: Such as that flesh is something we can slough So that the mind can be entirely freed. Then when the arms and legs have atrophied, And brain is all that's left of mortal stuff. We can lie on the beach with the seaweed And take our daily tide baths smooth and rough. There once we lay as blobs of jellyfish At evolution's opposite extreme. 10 But now as blobs of brain we'll lie and dream, With only one vestigial creature wish: Oh, may the tide be soon enough at high To keep our abstract verse from being dry.

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#### WHY WAIT FOR SCIENCE

Sarcastic Science, she would like to know, In her complacent ministry of fear, How we propose to get away from here When she has made things so we have to go Or be wiped out. Will she be asked to show Us how by rocket we may hope to steer To some star off there, say, a half light-year Through temperature of absolute zeró? Why wait for Science to supply the how When any amateur can tell it now? The way to go away should be the same As fifty million years ago we came— If anyone remembers how that was. I have a theory, but it hardly does.

#### ANY SIZE WE PLEASE

No one was looking at his lonely case;
So, like a half-mad outpost sentinel,
Indulging an absurd dramatic spell,
Albeit not without some shame of face,
He stretched his arms out to the dark of space
And held them absolutely parallel
In infinite appeal. Then saying "Hell,"
He drew them in for warmth of self-embrace.
He thought if he could have his space all curved,
Wrapped in around itself and self-befriended,
His science needn't get him so unnerved.
He had been too all out, too much extended.
He slapped his breast to verify his purse
And hugged himself for all his universe.

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#### AN IMPORTER

Mrs. Someone's been to Asia.

What she brought back would amaze ye. Bamboos, ivories, jades, and lacquers, Devil-scaring firecrackers, Recipes for tea with butter, Sacred rigmaroles to mutter, Subterfuge for saving faces, A developed taste in vases, Arguments too stale to mention 'Gainst American invention— Most of all the mass production Destined to prove our destruction. What are telephones, skyscrapers, Safety razors, Sunday papers

But the silliest evasion 15 Of the truths we owe an Asian? But the best of her exhibit Was a prayer machine from Tibet That by brook power in the garden Kept repeating Pardon, pardon; 20 And as picturesque machinery Beat a sundial in the scenery— The most primitive of engines Mass-producing with a vengeance. Teach those Asians mass production? 25 Teach your grandmother egg suction.

#### THE PLANNERS

If anything should put an end to This, I'm thinking the unborn would never miss What they had never had of vital bliss. No burst of nuclear phenomenon That put an end to what was going on Could make much difference to the dead and gone. Only a few of those even in whose day It happened would have very much to say. And anyone might ask them who were they. Who would they be? The guild of social planners 10 With the intention blazoned on their banners Of getting one more chance to change our manners? These anyway might think it was important That human history should not be shortened.

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#### NO HOLY WARS FOR THEM

States strong enough to do good are but few. Their number would seem limited to three. Good is a thing that they, the great, can do, But puny little states can only be. And being good for these means standing by To watch a war in nominal alliance, And when it's over watch the world's supply Get parceled out among the winning giants. God, have You taken cognizance of this? And what on this is Your divine position? That nations like the Cuban and the Swiss Can never hope to wage a Global Mission. No Holy Wars for them. The most the small Can ever give us is a nuisance brawl.

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#### BURSTING RAPTURE

I went to the physician to complain,
The time had been when anyone could turn
To farming for a simple way to earn;
But now 'twas there as elsewhere, any gain
Was made by getting science on the brain;
There was so much more every day to learn,
The discipline of farming was so stern,
It seemed as if I couldn't stand the strain.
But the physician's answer was, "There, there,
What you complain of, all the nations share.
Their effort is a mounting ecstasy
That when it gets too exquisite to bear
Will find relief in one burst. You shall see.
That's what a certain bomb was sent to be."

#### U.S. 1946 KING'S X

Having invented a new Holocaust, And been the first with it to win a war, How they make haste to cry with fingers crossed, King's X—no fairs to use it anymore!

#### THE INGENUITIES OF DEBT

These I assume were words so deeply meant They cut themselves in stone for permanent Like trouble in the brow above the eyes: TAKE CARE TO SELL YOUR HORSE BEFORE HE DIES THE ART OF LIFE IS PASSING LOSSES ON. The city saying it was Ctesiphon, Which may a little while by war and trade Have kept from being caught with the decayed, Infirm, worn-out, and broken on its hands; But judging by what little of it stands, Not even the ingenuities of debt Could save it from its losses being met. Sand has been thrusting in the square of door Across the tessellation of the floor. And only rests, a serpent on its chin, Content with contemplating, taking in, Till it can muster breath inside a hall To rear against the inscription on the wall.

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#### THE BROKEN DROUGHT

The prophet of disaster ceased to shout. Something was going right outside the hall. A rain, though stingy, had begun to fall That rather hurt his theory of the drought And all the great convention was about. A cheer went up that shook the mottoed wall. He did as Shakespeare says, you may recall, Good orators will do when they are out. Yet in his heart he was unshaken sure The drought was one no spit of rain could cure. It was the drought of deserts. Earth would soon Be uninhabitable as the moon. What for that matter had it ever been? Who advised man to come and live therein?

#### TO THE RIGHT PERSON

In the one state of ours that is a shire, There is a District Schoolhouse I admire As much as anything for situation.

There are few institutions standing higher This side the Rockies in my estimation—
Two thousand feet above the ocean level. It has two entries for coeducation.

But there's a tight-shut look to either door And to the windows of its fenestration, As if to say mere learning was the devil And this school wasn't keeping anymore, Unless for penitents who took their seat Upon its doorsteps as at mercy's feet To make up for a lack of meditation.

## "An Afterword" from Complete Poems : 1949:

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#### TAKE SOMETHING LIKE A STAR

#### FROM PLANE TO PLANE

Neither of them was better than the other.
They both were hired. And though Pike had the advantage
Of having hoed and mowed for fifty years,
Dick had of being fresh and full of college.
So if they fought about equality
It was on an equality they fought.

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"Your trouble is not sticking to the subject," Pike said with temper. And Dick longed to say, "Your trouble is bucolic lack of logic," But all he did say was, "What is the subject?"

"It's whether these professions really work. Now take the Doctor—"

They were giving corn
A final going over with the hoe
Before they turned from everything to hay.
The wavy upflung pennons of the corn
Were loose all round their legs—you couldn't say
How many thousand of them in an acre.
Every time Dick or Pike looked up, the Doctor
With one foot on the dashboard of his buggy
Was still in sight like someone to depend on.
Nowhere but on the Bradford Interval
By the Connecticut could anyone
Have stayed in sight so long as an example.

"—Taking his own sweet time as if to show
He don't mind having lost a case," Pike said;
And when he caught Dick looking once too often,
"Hoeing's too much like work for Dick," he added.
"Dick wishes he could swap jobs with the Doctor.

Let's holler and ask him if he won't prescribe For all humanity a complete rest From all this wagery. But what's the use Of asking any sympathy of him? That class of people don't know what work is— More than they know what courage is that claim The moral kind's as brave as facing bullets."	30
Dick told him to be fairer to the Doctor: "He looks to me like going home successful, Full of success, with that foot on the dashboard, As a small self-conferred reward of virtue. I get you when you hoe out to the river,	40
Then pick your hoe up, maybe shoulder it, And take your walk of recreation back To curry favor with the dirt some more. Isn't it pretty much the same idea? You said yourself you weren't avoiding work. You'd bet you got more work done in a day, Or at least in a lifetime, by that method."	45
"I wouldn't hoe both ways for anybody!"  "And right you are. You do the way we do In reading, don't you, Bill?—at every line end Pick up our eyes and carry them back idle Across the page to where we started from. The other way of reading back and forth,	50
Known as boustrophedon, was found too awkward."  Pike grunted rather grimly with misgiving  At being thus expounded to himself  And made of by a boy; then having reached  The river bank, quit work defiantly,  As if he didn't care who understood him	55

And started his march back again discoursing: "A man has got to keep his extrication. The important thing is not to get bogged down In what he has to do to earn a living. What's more, I hate to keep afflicting weeds. I like to give my enemies a truce."	60
"Be careful how you use your influence. If I decided to become a doctor, You'd be to blame for furnishing the reasons."	
"I thought you meant to be an Indian Chief—You said the second coming of Tecumseh. Remember how you envied General Sherman. William Tecumseh Sherman. Why Tecumseh?" (He tried to imitate Dick's tone of voice.) "You wished your middle name had been Tecumseh."	70
"I think I'll change my mind."	
"You're saying that To bother me by siding with the Doctor. You've got no social conscience, as they say, Or you'd feel differently about the classes. You can't claim <i>you're</i> a social visionary."	75
"I'm saying it to argue his idea's The same as your idea, only more so. And I suspect it may be more and more so The further up the scale of work you go. You could do worse than boost me up to see."	80
"It isn't just the same, and someday, schoolboy, I'll show you why it isn't—not today. Today I want to talk about the sun. May as expected was a disappointment,	85

And June was not much better, cold and rainy. The sun then had his longest day in heaven, But no one from the feeling would have guessed His presence was particularly there.	90
He only stayed to set the summer on fire, Then fled for fear of getting stuck in lava In case the rocks should melt and run again. Everyone has to keep his extrication."	95
"That's what the Doctor's doing, keeping his. That's what I have to do in school, keep mine From knowing more than I know how to think with. You see it in yourself and in the sun; Yet you refuse to see it in the Doctor."	100
"All right, let's harmonize about the Doctor.  He may be some good, in a manner of speaking.  I own he does look busy when the sun Is in the sign of Sickness in the winter And everybody's being sick for Christmas.  Then's when his Morgan lights out throwing snowballs Behind her at the dashboard of his pung."	105
"But Cygnus isn't in the Zodiac," Dick longed to say, but wasn't sure enough Of his astronomy. (He'd have to take A half course in it next year.) And besides, Why give the controversy a relapse?	110
They were both bent on scuffling up Alluvium so pure that when a blade To their surprise rang once on stone all day Each tried to be the first at getting in A superstitious cry for farmers' luck—	115

A rivalry that made them both feel kinder. And so to let Pike seem to have the palm 120 With grace and not too formal a surrender Dick said. "You've been a lesson in work wisdom To work with, Bill. But you won't have my thanks. I like to think the sun's like you in that— Since you bring up the subject of the sun. 125 This would be my interpretation of him. He bestows summer on us and escapes Before our realizing what we have To thank him for. He doesn't want our thanks. He likes to turn his back on gratitude 130 And avoid being worshiped as a god. Our worship was a thing he had too much of In the old days in Persia and Peru. Shall I go on or have I said enough— To convey my respect for your position?" 135 "I guess so," Pike said, innocent of Milton. "That's where I reckon Santa Claus comes in-To be our parents' pseudonymity In Christmas giving, so they can escape The thanks and let him catch it as a scapegoat. 140 And even he, you'll notice, dodges off Up chimney to avoid the worst of it. We all know his address, Mount Hecla, Iceland. So anyone can write to him who has to; Though they do say he doesn't open letters. 145 A Santa Claus was needed. And there is one."

"So I have heard and do in part believe it," Dick said, to old Pike innocent of Shakespeare.

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#### POD OF THE MILKWEED

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Calling all butterflies of every race From source unknown but from no special place They ever will return to all their lives, Because unlike the bees they have no hives, The milkweed brings up to my very door The theme of wanton waste in peace and war As it has never been to me before. And so it seems a flower's coming out That should if not be talked then sung about. The countless wings that from the infinite Make such a noiseless tumult over it Do no doubt with their color compensate For what the drab weed lacks of the ornate. For drab it is its fondest must admit. And yes, although it is a flower that flows With milk and honey, it is bitter milk, As anyone who ever broke its stem And dared to taste the wound a little knows. It tastes as if it might be opiate. But whatsoever else it may secrete, Its flowers' distilled honey is so sweet It makes the butterflies intemperate. There is no slumber in its juice for them. One knocks another off from where he clings. They knock the dyestuff off each other's wings— With thirst on hunger to the point of lust. They raise in their intemperance a cloud

Of mingled butterfly and flower dust
That hangs perceptibly above the scene.
In being sweet to these ephemerals
The sober weed has managed to contrive
In our three hundred days and sixty-five
One day too sweet for beings to survive.
Many shall come away as struggle-worn
And spent and dusted off of their regalia,
To which at daybreak they were freshly born,
As after one-of-them's proverbial failure
From having beaten all day long in vain
Against the wrong side of a windowpane.

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But waste was of the essence of the scheme.
And all the good they did for man or god
To all those flowers they passionately trod
Was leave as their posterity one pod
With an inheritance of restless dream.
He hangs on upside down with talon feet
In an inquisitive position odd
As any Guatemalan parakeet.
Something eludes him. Is it food to eat?
Or some dim secret of the good of waste?
He almost has it in his talon clutch.
Where have those flowers and butterflies all gone
That science may have staked the future on?
He seems to say the reason why so much
Should come to nothing must be fairly faced.

#### AWAY!

Now I out walking The world desert,

Do me no hurt. I leave behind 5 Good friends in town. Let them get well-wined And go lie down. Don't think I leave For the outer dark 10 Like Adam and Eve Put out of the Park. Forget the myth. There is no one I Am put out with 15 Or put out by. Unless I'm wrong I but obey The urge of a song: "I'm—bound—away!" 20 And I may return If dissatisfied With what I learn From having died.

And my shoe and my stocking

#### A CABIN IN THE CLEARING

#### For Alfred Edwards

MIST. I don't believe the sleepers in this house Know where they are.

They've been here long enough SMOKE. To push the woods back from around the house And part them in the middle with a path. MIST. And still I doubt if they know where they are. 5 And I begin to fear they never will. All they maintain the path for is the comfort Of visiting with the equally bewildered. Nearer in plight their neighbors are than distance. SMOKE. I am the guardian wraith of starlit smoke 10 That leans out this and that way from their chimney. I will not have their happiness despaired of. MIST. No one—not I—would give them up for lost Simply because they don't know where they are. I am the damper counterpart of smoke, 15 That gives off from a garden ground at night But lifts no higher than a garden grows. I cotton to their landscape. That's who I am. I am no further from their fate than you are. SMOKE. They must by now have learned the native tongue. Why don't they ask the Red Man where they are? MIST. They often do, and none the wiser for it. So do they also ask philosophers Who come to look in on them from the pulpit. They will ask anyone there is to ask-25 In the fond faith accumulated fact Will of itself take fire and light the world up. Learning has been a part of their religion. If the day ever comes when they know who They are, they may know better where they are. 30

But who they are is too much to believe-

Either for them or the onlooking world. They are too sudden to be credible.

On what should be their daylong theme continued.
Putting the lamp out has not put their thought out.
Let us pretend the dewdrops from the eaves
Are you and I eavesdropping on their unrest—
A mist and smoke eavesdropping on a haze—
And see if we can tell the bass from the soprano.

Than smoke and mist who better could appraise The kindred spirit of an inner haze?

#### CLOSED FOR GOOD

Much as I own I owe
The passers of the past
Because their to and fro
Has cut this road to last,
I owe them more today
Because they've gone away

And come not back with steed And chariot to chide My slowness with their speed And scare me to one side. They have found other scenes For haste and other means.

They leave the road to me To walk in saying naught Perhaps but to a tree Inaudibly in thought, "From you the road receives

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A priming coat of leaves.

"And soon for lack of sun,
The prospects are in white
It will be further done,
But with a coat so light
The shape of leaves will show
Beneath the spread of snow."

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And so on into winter
Till even I have ceased
To come as a foot printer,
And only some slight beast
So mousy or so foxy
Shall print there as my proxy.

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#### AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE

Columbus may have worked the wind A new and better way to Ind And also proved the world a ball, But how about the wherewithal? Not just for scientific news Had the Oueen backed him to a cruise.

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Remember he had made the test
Finding the East by sailing West.
But had he found it? Here he was
Without one trinket from Ormuz
To save the Queen from family censure
For her investment in his venture.

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There had been something strangely wrong With every coast he tried along.

He could imagine nothing barrener. The trouble was with him the mariner. He wasn't off a mere degree; His reckoning was off a sea.	15
And to intensify the drama Another mariner, da Gama, Came just then sailing into port From the same general resort, And with the gold in hand to show for His claim it was another Ophir.	20
Had but Columbus known enough He might have boldly made the bluff That better than da Gama's gold He had been given to behold The race's future trial place, A fresh start for the human race.	25
He might have fooled Valladolid. I was deceived by what he did. If I had had my chance when young I should have had Columbus sung As a god who had given us A more than Moses' exodus.	35
But all he did was spread the room Of our enacting out the doom Of being in each other's way, And so put off the weary day When we would have to put our mind On how to crowd but still be kind.	40
For these none-too-apparent gains He got no more than dungeon chains	

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And such small posthumous renown (A country named for him, a town, A holiday) as, where he is, He may not recognize for his.	45
They say his flagship's unlaid ghost Still probes and dents our rocky coast With animus approaching hate, And for not turning out a strait, He has cursed every river mouth From fifty North to fifty South.	50
Someday our navy, I predict, Will take in tow this derelict And lock him through Culebra Cut, His eyes as good (or bad) as shut To all the modern works of man And all we call American.	60
America is hard to see.  Less partial witnesses than he In book on book have testified They could not see it from outside— Or inside either for that matter.  We know the literary chatter.	65
Columbus, as I say, will miss All he owes to the artifice Of tractor-plow and motor-drill. To naught but his own force of will, Or at most some Andean quake, Will he ascribe this lucky break.	70
High purpose makes the hero rude; He will not stop for gratitude.	

But let him show his haughty stern To what was never his concern Except as it denied him way To fortune-hunting in Cathay.

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He will be starting pretty late.
He'll find that Asiatic state
Is about tired of being looted
While having its beliefs disputed.
His can be no such easy raid
As Cortez on the Aztecs made.

#### ONE MORE BREVITY

I opened the door so my last look Should be taken outside a house and book. Before I gave up seeing and slept I said I would see how Sirius kept His watchdog eye on what remained To be gone into if not explained. But scarcely was my door ajar, When past the leg I thrust for bar Slipped in to be my problem guest, Not a heavenly dog made manifest, But an earthly dog of the carriage breed; Who, having failed of the modern speed, Now asked asylum—and I was stirred To be the one so dog-preferred. He dumped himself like a bag of bones. He sighed himself a couple of groans, And head to tail then firmly curled Like swearing off on the traffic world. I set him water, I set him food.

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He rolled an eye with gratitude	20
(Or merely manners it may have been),	
But never so much as lifted chin.	
His hard tail loudly smacked the floor	
As if beseeching me, "Please, no more;	
I can't explain—tonight at least."	25
His brow was perceptibly trouble-creased.	
So I spoke in terms of adoption thus:	
"Gustie, old boy, Dalmatian Gus,	
You're right, there's nothing to discuss.	
Don't try to tell me what's on your mind,	30
The sorrow of having been left behind,	
Or the sorrow of having run away.	
All that can wait for the light of day.	
Meanwhile feel obligation-free.	
Nobody has to confide in me."	35
'Twas too one-sided a dialogue,	
And I wasn't sure I was talking dog.	
I broke off baffled. But all the same,	
In fancy I ratified his name,	
Gustie—Dalmatian Gus, that is—	40
And started shaping my life to his,	
Finding him in his right supplies	
And sharing his miles of exercise.	
Next morning the minute I was about	
He was at the door to be let out	45
With an air that said, "I have paid my call.	
You mustn't feel hurt if now I'm all	
For getting back somewhere or further on."	
I opened the door and he was gone.	
I was to taste in little the grief	50
That comes of dogs' lives being so brief,	
THAT COINES OF HOES TIVES DELLAS STATES	

Only a fraction of ours at most. He might have been the dream of a ghost In spite of the way his tail had smacked My floor so hard and matter-of-fact. 55 And things have been going so strangely since, I wouldn't be too hard to convince, I might even claim, he was Sirius (Think of presuming to call him Gus), The star itself—Heaven's greatest star, 60 Not a meteorite, but an avatar— Who had made an overnight descent To show by deeds he didn't resent My having depended on him so long, And yet done nothing about it in song. 65 A symbol was all he could hope to convey, An intimation, a shot of ray, A meaning I was supposed to seek, And finding, wasn't disposed to speak.

#### ESCAPIST—NEVER

He is no fugitive—escaped, escaping.

No one has seen him stumble looking back.
His fear is not behind him but beside him
On either hand to make his course perhaps
A crooked straightness yet no less a straightness.
He runs face forward. He is a pursuer.
He seeks a seeker who in his turn seeks
Another still, lost far into the distance.
Any who seek him seek in him the seeker.
His life is a pursuit of a pursuit forever.
It is the future that creates his present.
All is an interminable chain of longing.

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## FOR JOHN F. KENNEDY HIS INAUGURATION

Gift outright of "The Gift Outright"
(With some preliminary history in rhyme)

Summoning artists to participate	
In the august occasions of the state	
Seems something artists ought to celebrate.	
Today is for my cause a day of days.	
And his be poetry's old-fashioned praise	5
Who was the first to think of such a thing.	
This verse that in acknowledgment I bring	
Goes back to the beginning of the end	
Of what had been for centuries the trend;	
A turning point in modern history.	10
Colonial had been the thing to be	
As long as the great issue was to see	
What country'd be the one to dominate	
By character, by tongue, by native trait,	
The new world Christopher Columbus found.	15
The French, the Spanish, and the Dutch were downed	
And counted out. Heroic deeds were done.	
Elizabeth the First and England won.	
Now came on a new order of the ages	
That in the Latin of our founding sages	20
(Is it not written on the dollar bill	
We carry in our purse and pocket still?)	
God nodded His approval of as good.	
So much those heroes knew and understood—	
I mean the great four, Washington,	25
John Adams, Jefferson, and Madison	
So much they knew as consecrated seers	

They must have seen ahead what now appears:	
They would bring empires down about our ears	
And by the example of our Declaration	30
Make everybody want to be a nation.	
And this is no aristocratic joke	
At the expense of negligible folk.	
We see how seriously the races swarm	
In their attempts at sovereignty and form.	35
They are our wards we think to some extent	
For the time being and with their consent,	
To teach them how Democracy is meant.	
"New order of the ages" did we say?	
If it looks none too orderly today,	40
'Tis a confusion it was ours to start	
So in it have to take courageous part.	
No one of honest feeling would approve	
A ruler who pretended not to love	
A turbulence he had the better of.	45
Everyone knows the glory of the twain	
Who gave America the aeroplane	
To ride the whirlwind and the hurricane.	
Some poor fool has been saying in his heart	
Glory is out of date in life and art.	50
Our venture in revolution and outlawry	
Has justified itself in freedom's story	
Right down to now in glory upon glory.	
Come fresh from an election like the last,	
The greatest vote a people ever cast,	55
So close yet sure to be abided by,	
It is no miracle our mood is high.	
Courage is in the air in bracing whiffs	
Better than all the stalemate an's and ifs.	
There was the book of profile tales declaring	60

For the emboldened politicians daring To break with followers when in the wrong. A healthy independence of the throng, A democratic form of right divine To rule first answerable to high design. There is a call to life a little sterner, And braver for the earner, learner, yearner. Less criticism of the field and court And more preoccupation with the sport. It makes the prophet in us all presage The glory of a next Augustan age Of a power leading from its strength and pride, Of young ambition eager to be tried, Firm in our free beliefs without dismay, In any game the nations want to play. A golden age of poetry and power Of which this noonday's the beginning hour.

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#### THE GIFT OUTRIGHT

The land was ours before we were the land's. She was our land more than a hundred years Before we were her people. She was ours In Massachusetts, in Virginia, But we were England's, still colonials, Possessing what we still were unpossessed by, Possessed by what we now no more possessed. Something we were withholding made us weak Until we found out that it was ourselves We were withholding from our land of living, And forthwith found salvation in surrender. Such as we were we gave ourselves outright (The deed of gift was many deeds of war)

To the land vaguely realizing westward, But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced, Such as she was, such as she would become.

#### ACCIDENTALLY ON PURPOSE

The Universe is but the Thing of things, The things but balls all going round in rings. Some of them mighty huge, some mighty tiny, All of them radiant and mighty shiny.

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They mean to tell us all was rolling blind Till accidentally it hit on mind In an albino monkey in a jungle, And even then it had to grope and bungle,

Till Darwin came to earth upon a year To show the evolution how to steer. They mean to tell us, though, the Omnibus Had no real purpose till it got to us.

Never believe it. At the very worst It must have had the purpose from the first To produce purpose as the fitter bred: We were just purpose coming to a head.

Whose purpose was it? His or Hers or Its? Let's leave that to the scientific wits. Grant me intention, purpose, and design—That's near enough for me to the Divine.

And yet for all this help of head and brain How happily instinctive we remain, Our best guide upward further to the light, Passionate preference such as love at sight.

#### A NEVER NAUGHT SONG

There was never naught,	
There was always thought.	
But when noticed first	
It was fairly burst	
Into having weight.	5
It was in a state	
Of atomic One.	
Matter was begun—	
And in fact complete,	
One and yet discrete	10
To conflict and pair.	
Everything was there,	
Every single thing	
Waiting was to bring,	
Clear from hydrogen	15
All the way to men.	
It is all the tree	
It will ever be,	
Bole and branch and root	
Cunningly minute.	20
And this gist of all	
Is so infra-small	
As to blind our eyes	
To its every guise	
And so render nil	25
The whole Yggdrasill.	
Out of coming-in	
Into having been!	
So the picture's caught	
Almost next to naught	30
But the force of thought.	

#### VERSION

Once there was an Archer, And there was a minute When He shot a shaft On a New Departure. Then He must have laughed: 5 Comedy was in it. For the game He hunted Was the non-existence Of the Phoenix pullet (The  $M\dot{\eta}$   $\ddot{o}\nu$  of Plato), 10 And the shaft got blunted On her non-resistance, Like a dum-dum bullet— Did in fact get splattered Like a ripe tomato. 15 That's how matter mattered.

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#### A CONCEPT SELF-CONCEIVED

The latest creed that has to be believed And entered in our childish catechism Is that the All's a concept self-conceived, Which is no more than good old Pantheism.

Great is the reassurance of recall.
Why go on further with confusing voice
To say God's either All or over all?
The rule is, never give a child a choice.

### [FORGIVE, O LORD...]

Forgive, O Lord, my little jokes on Thee And I'll forgive Thy great big one on me.

### KITTY HAWK

Back there in 1953 with the Huntington Cairnses (A skylark for them in three-beat phrases)

#### PART ONE

PORTENTS, PRESENTIMENTS,
AND PREMONITIONS

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Left-unwritten letter	20
I had read and thrown.	
Oh, but not to boast,	
Ever since Nag's Head	
Had my heart been great,	
Not to claim elate,	25
With a need the gale	
Filled me with to shout	
Summary riposte	
To the dreary wail	
There's no knowing what	30
Love is all about.	
Poets know a lot.	
Never did I fail	
Of an answer back	
To the zodiac	35
When in heartless chorus	
Aries and Taurus,	
Gemini and Cancer	
Mocked me for an answer.	
It was on my tongue	40
To have up and sung	
The initial flight	
I can see now might—	
Should have been—my own	
Into the unknown,	45
Into the sublime	
Off these sands of Time	
Time had seen amass	
From his hourglass.	
Once I told the Master,	50
Later when we met,	
I'd been here one night	

As a young Alastor	
When the scene was set	
For some kind of flight	55
Long before he flew it.	
Just supposing I—	
I had beat him to it.	
What did men mean by	
THE original?	60
Why was it so very,	
Very necessary	
To be first of all?	
How about the lie	
That he wasn't first?	65
I was glad he laughed.	
There was such a lie	
Money and maneuver	
Fostered overlong	
Until Herbert Hoover	70
Raised this tower shaft	
To undo the wrong.	
Of all crimes the worst	
Is to steal the glory	
From the great and brave,	75
Even more accursed	
Than to rob the grave.	
But the sorry story	
Has been long redressed.	
And as for my jest	80
I had any claim	
To the runway's fame	
Had I only sung,	
That is all my tongue.	
I can't make it seem	85

More than that my theme	
Might have been a dream	
Of dark Hatteras	
Or sad Roanoke,	
One more fond alas	90
For the seed of folk	
Sowed in vain by Raleigh,	
Raleigh of the cloak,	
And some other folly.	
Getting too befriended,	95
As so often, ended	
Any melancholy	
Götterdämmerung	
That I might have sung.	
I fell in among	100
Some kind of committee	
From Elizabeth City,	
Each and every one	
Loaded with a gun	
Or a demijohn.	105
(Need a body ask	
If it was a flask?)	
Out to kill a duck	
Or perhaps a swan	
Over Currituck.	110
This was not their day	
Anything to slay	
Unless one another.	
But their lack of luck	
Made them no less gay,	115
No, nor less polite.	
They included me	

Like a little brother	
In their revelry—	
All concern to take	120
Care my innocence	
Should at all events	
Tenderly be kept	
For good gracious' sake.	
And if they were gentle	125
They were sentimental.	
One drank to his mother	
While another wept.	
Something made it sad	
For me to break loose	130
From the need they had	
To make themselves glad	
They were of no use.	
Manners made it hard,	
But that night I stole	135
Off on the unbounded	
Beaches where the whole	
Of the Atlantic pounded.	
There I next fell in	
With a lone coast guard	140
On midnight patrol,	
Who as of a sect	
Asked about my soul	
And where-all I'd been.	
Apropos of sin,	145
Did I recollect	
How the wreckers wrecked	
Theodosia Burr	
Off this very shore?	
Twas to punish her.	150

But her father more—	
We don't know what for:	
There was no confession.	
Things they think she wore	
Still sometimes occur	155
In someone's possession	
Here at Kitty Hawk.	
We can have no notion	
Of the strange devotion	
Burr had for his daughter:	160
He was too devoted.	
So it was in talk	
We prolonged the walk,	
On one side the ocean,	
And on one a water	165
Of the inner sound;	
"And the moon was full,"	
As the poet said	
And I aptly quoted.	
And its being full	170
And right overhead,	
Small but strong and round,	
By its tidal pull	
Made all being full.	
Kitty Hawk, O Kitty,	175
Here it was again	
In the selfsame day,	
I at odds with men	
Came upon their pity,	
Equally profound	180
For a son astray	
And a daughter drowned	

### PART TWO

When the chance went by	
For my Muse to fly	
From this Runway Beach	185
As a figure of speech	
In a flight of words,	
Little I imagined	
Men would treat this sky	
Someday to a pageant	190
Like a thousand birds.	
Neither you nor I	
Ever thought to fly.	
Oh, but fly we did,	
Literally fly.	195
That's because though mere	
Lilliputians we're	
What Catullus called	
Somewhat (aliquid).	
Mind you, we are mind.	200
We are not the kind	
To stay too confined.	
After having crawled	
Round the place on foot	
And done yeoman share	205
Of just staying put,	
We arose from there	
And we scaled a plane	
So the stilly air	
Almost pulled our hair	210
Like a hurricane.	
Then I saw it all.	
Then I saw it all.	

Pulpiteers will censure

Our instinctive venture	
Into what they call	215
The material	
When we took that fall	
From the apple tree.	
But God's own descent	
Into flesh was meant	220
As a demonstration	
That the supreme merit	
Lay in risking spirit	
In substantiation.	
Westerners inherit	225
A design for living	
Deeper into matter—	
Not without due patter	
Of a great misgiving.	
All the science zest	230
To materialize	
By on-penetration	
Into earth and skies	
(Don't forget the latter	
Is but further matter)	235
Has been West-Northwest.	
If it was not wise,	
Tell me why the East	
Seemingly has ceased	
From its long stagnation	240
In mere meditation.	
What is all the fuss	
To catch up with us?	
Can it be to flatter	
Us with emulation?	245
Spirit enters flesh	

And for all it's worth	
Charges into earth	•
In birth after birth	
Ever fresh and fresh.	250
We may take the view	
That its derring-do	
Thought of in the large	
Was one mighty charge	
On our human part	255
Of the soul's ethereal	
Into the material.	
In a running start,	
As it were from scratch,	
On a certain slab	260
Of (we'll say) basalt	
In or near Moab	
With intent to vault	
In a vaulting match,	
Never mind with whom	265
(No one, I presume,	
But ourselves—mankind,	
In a love and hate	
Rivalry combined)—	
'Twas a radio	270
Voice that said, "Get set	
In the alphabet,	
That is, A B C,	
Which someday should be	
Rhymed with 1 2 3	275
On a college gate."	
Then the radio	
Region voice said, "Go,	
Go you on to know	

More than you can sing.	280
Have no hallowing fears	
Anything's forbidden	
Just because it's hidden.	
Trespass and encroach	
On successive spheres	285
Without self-reproach."	
Then for years and years	
And for miles and miles	
'Cross the Aegean Isles,	
Athens, Rome, France, Britain,	290
Always West-Northwest,	
As have I not written,	
Till the so-long-kept	
Purpose was expressed	
In the leap we leapt.	295
And the radio	
Cried, "The Leap—The Leap!"	
It belonged to US,	
Not our friends the Russ,	
To have run the event	300
To its full extent	
And have won the crown,	
Or let's say the cup,	
On which with a date	
Is the inscription, though,	305
"Nothing can go up	
But it must come down."	
Earth is still our fate.	
The uplifted sight	
We enjoyed at night	310
When instead of sheep	
We were counting stars,	

Not to go to sleep,	
But to stay awake	
For good gracious' sake,	315
Naming stars to boot	
To avoid mistake,	
Jupiter and Mars,	
Just like Pullman cars,	
Twas no vain pursuit.	320
Some have preached and taught	
All there was to thought	
Was to master Nature	
By some nomenclature.	
But if not a law	325
Twas an end foregone	
Anything we saw	
And thus fastened on	
With an epithet,	
We would see to yet—	330
We would want to touch,	
Not to mention clutch.	
TALK ALOFT	
Someone says the Lord	
Says our reaching toward	
Is its own reward.	335
One would like to know	
Where God says it, though.	
,	
We don't like that much.	
Let's see where we are.	
What's that sulphur blur	340
Off there in the fog?	
Go consult the log.	

It's some kind of town, But it's not New York. We're not very far Out from where we were. It's still Kitty Hawk.	345
We'd have got as far Even at a walk.	
Don't you crash me down. Though our kiting ships Prove but flying chips From the science shop	350
And when motors stop	
They may have to drop	355
Short of anywhere,	
Though our leap in air	
Prove as vain a hop	
As the hop from grass	
Of a grasshopper,	360
Don't discount our powers;	
We have made a pass	
At the infinite,	
Made it, as it were,	
Rationally ours,	365
To the most remote	
Swirl of neon-lit	
Particle afloat.	
Ours was to reclaim	
What had long been faced	370
As a fact of waste	
And was waste in name.	
That's how we become	

Though an earth so small,	•
Justly known to fame	375
As the Capital	
Of the universe.	
We make no pretension	
Of projecting ray	
We can call our own	380
From this ball of stone,	
None I don't reject	
As too new to mention.	
All we do's reflect	
From our rocks, and yes,	385
From our brains no less.	
And the better part	
Is the ray we dart	
From this head and heart,	
The mens animi.	390
Till we came to be	
There was not a trace	
Of a thinking race	
Anywhere in space.	
We know of no world	395
Being whirled and whirled	
Round and round the rink	
Of a single sun	
(So as not to sink),	
Not a single one	400
That has thought to think.	

THE HOLINESS OF WHOLENESS

Pilot, though at best your

Flight is but a gesture,	
And your rise and swoop,	
But a loop the loop,	405
Lands on someone hard	
In his own backyard	
From no higher heaven	
Than a bolt of levin,	
I don't say retard.	410
Keep on elevating.	
But while meditating	
What we can't or can	
Let's keep starring man	
In the royal role.	415
It will not be his	
Ever to create	
One least germ or coal.	
Those two things we can't.	
But the comfort is	420
In the covenant	
We may get control,	
If not of the whole,	
Of at least some part	
Where not too immense,	425
So by craft or art	
We can give the part	
Wholeness in a sense.	
The becoming fear	
That becomes us best	430
Is lest habit-ridden	
In the kitchen midden	
Of our dump of earning	
And our dump of learning	

We come nowhere near Getting thought expressed.	435
THE MIXTURE MECHANIC	
This wide flight we wave At the stars or moon	
Means that we approve	
Of them on the move.	440
Ours is to behave	
Like a kitchen spoon Of a size Titanic	
To keep all things stirred	
In a blend mechanic,	445
Saying That's the tune,	447
That's the pretty kettle!	
Matter mustn't curd,	
Separate and settle.	
Action is the word.	450
Nature's never quite Sure she hasn't erred In her vague design	
Till on some fine night	
We two come in flight	455
Like a king and queen	
And by right divine,	
Waving scepter-baton,	
Undertake to tell her	
What in being stellar	460
She's supposed to mean.	
God of the machine, Peregrine machine,	

Some still think is Satan,	
Unto you the thanks	465
For this token flight,	
Thanks to you and thanks	
To the brothers Wright,	
Once considered cranks	
Like Darius Green	470
In their hometown, Dayton.	

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### **AUSPEX**

Once in a California Sierra
I was swooped down upon when I was small,
And measured, but not taken after all,
By a great eagle bird in all its terror.

Such auspices are very hard to read.
My parents when I ran to them averred
I was rejected by the royal bird
As one who would not make a Ganymede.

Not find a barkeep unto Jove in me? I have remained resentful to this day When any but myself presumed to say That there was anything I couldn't be.

### THE DRAFT HORSE

With a lantern that wouldn't burn In too frail a buggy we drove Behind too heavy a horse Through a pitch-dark limitless grove. And a man came out of the trees And took our horse by the head And reaching back to his ribs Deliberately stabbed him dead. The ponderous beast went down With a crack of a broken shaft. And the night drew through the trees In one long invidious draft. The most unquestioning pair That ever accepted fate And the least disposed to ascribe Any more than we had to to hate, We assumed that the man himself Or someone he had to obey Wanted us to get down And walk the rest of the way.

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### **ENDS**

Loud talk in the overlighted house That made us stumble past. Oh, there had once been night the first, But this was night the last.

Of all the things he might have said, Sincere or insincere, He never said she wasn't young, And hadn't been his dear. Oh, some as soon would throw it all As throw a part away.
And some will say all sorts of things, But some mean what they say.

10

### PERIL OF HOPE

It is right in there Betwixt and between The orchard bare And the orchard green,

5

When the boughs are right In a flowery burst Of pink and white, That we fear the worst.

10

For there's not a clime But at any cost Will take that time For a night of frost.

10

### QUESTIONING FACES

The winter owl banked just in time to pass And save herself from breaking window glass. And her wings straining suddenly aspread Caught color from the last of evening red In a display of underdown and quill To glassed-in children at the windowsill.

### DOES NO ONE AT ALL EVER FEEL THIS WAY IN THE LEAST?

O ocean sea, for all your being vast, Your separation of us from the Old That should have made the New World newly great Would only disappoint us at the last If it should not do anything foretold To make us different in a single trait.	5
This though we took the Indian name for maize And changed it to the English name for wheat. It seemed to comfort us to call it corn. And so with homesickness in many ways We sought however crudely to defeat Our chance of being people newly born.	10
And now, O sea, you're lost by aeroplane. Our sailors ride a bullet for a boat. Our coverage of distance is so facile It makes us to have had a sea in vain. Our moat around us is no more a moat, Our continent no more a moated castle.	15
Grind shells, O futile sea, grind empty shells For all the use you are along the strand. I cannot hold you innocent of fault. Spring water in our mountain bosom swells To pour fresh rivers on you from the land, Till you have lost the savor of your salt.	20
I pick a dead shell up from where the kelp Lies in a windrow, brittle-dry and black, And holding it far forward for a symbol	25

I cry, "Do work for women—all the help I ask of you. Grind this I throw you back Into a lady's finger ring or thimble."	30
The ocean had been spoken to before. But if it had no thought of paying heed To taunt of mine I knew a place to go Where I need listen to its rote no more, Nor taste its salt, nor smell its fish and weed, Nor be reminded of them in a blow—	35
So far inland the very name of ocean Goes mentionless except in baby-school When teacher's own experiences fail her And she can only give the class a notion Of what it is by calling it a pool And telling them how Sinbad was a sailor.	40

### THE BAD ISLAND—EASTER

(Perhaps so called because it may have risen once)

That primitive head
So ambitiously vast,
Yet so rude in its art,
Is as easily read
For the woes of the past
As a clinical chart.
For one thing alone,
The success of the lip
So scornfully curled,
Has that tonnage of stone
Been brought in a ship

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### Halfway round the world.

They were days on that stone.	
They gave it the wedge	
Till it flaked from the ledge.	15
Then they gave it a face.	
Then with tackle unknown	
They stood it in place	
On a cliff for a throne.	
They gave it a face	20
Of what was it? Scorn	
Of themselves as a race	
For having been born?	
And then having first	
Been cajoled and coerced	25
Into being beruled?	
By what stratagem	
Was their cynical throng	
So cozened and fooled	
And jollied along?	30
Were they told they were free	
And persuaded to see	
Something in it for them?	
Well they flourished and waxed	
By executive guile,	35
By fraud and by force,	
Or so for a while;	
Until overtaxed	
In nerve and resource	
They started to wane.	40
They emptied the aisle	
Except for a few	
That can but be described	

1 .1	
As a vile residue,	
And a garrulous too.	45
They were punished and bribed;	
All was in vain,	
Nothing would do.	
Some mistake had been made	
No book can explain,	50
Some change in the law	
That nobody saw	
Except as a gain.	
But one thing is sure,	
Whatever kultur	55
They were made to parade,	
What heights of altrur-	
ian thought to attain,	
Not a trace of it's left	
But the gospel of sharing,	60
And that has decayed	
Into a belief	
In being a thief	
And persisting in theft	
With cynical daring.	65

### OUR DOOM TO BLOOM

"Shine, perishing republic."

ROBINSON JEFFERS

Cumaean Sibyl, charming Ogress, What are the simple facts of Progress That I may trade on with reliance In consultation with my clients? The Sibyl said, "Go back to Rome And tell your clientele at home
That if it's not a mere illusion
All there is to it is diffusion—
Of coats, oats, votes, to all mankind.
In the Surviving Book we find
That liberal, or conservative,
The state's one function is to give.
The bud must bloom till blowsy blown
Its petals loosen and are strown;
And that's a fate it can't evade
Unless 'twould rather wilt than fade."

### THE OBJECTION TO BEING STEPPED ON

At the end of the row I stepped on the toe Of an unemployed hoe. It rose in offense And struck me a blow 5 In the seat of my sense. It wasn't to blame But I called it a name. And I must say it dealt Me a blow that I felt 10 Like malice prepense. You may call me a fool, But was there a rule The weapon should be Turned into a tool? 15 And what do we see? The first tool I step on Turned into a weapon.

### A-WISHING WELL

A poet would a-wishing go,	
And he wished love were thus and so.	
"If but it were," he said, said he,	
"And one thing more that may not be,	
This world were good enough for me."	5
I quote him with respect verbatim.	
Some quaint dissatisfaction ate him.	
I would give anything to learn	
The one thing more of his concern.	
But listen to me register	10
The one thing more I wish there were.	
As a confirmed astronomer	
I'm always for a better sky.	
(I don't care how the world gets by.)	
I'm tempted to let go restraint,	15
Like splashing phosphorescent paint,	
And fill the sky as full of moons	
As circus day of toy balloons.	
That ought to make the Sunday Press.	
But that's not like me. On much less	20
And much, much easier to get,	
From childhood has my heart been set.	
Some planets, the unblinking four,	
Are seen to juggle moons galore.	
A lot would be a lot of fun.	25
But all I ask's an extra one.	
Let's get my incantation right:	
"I wish I may, I wish I might"	
Give earth another satellite.	
Where would we get another? Come,	30
Don't you know where new moons are from?	

When clever people ask me where I get a poem, I despair. I'm apt to tell them in New York I think I get it via stork 35 From some extinct old chimney pot. Believe the Arcadians or not. They claim they recollect the morn When unto Earth her first was born. It cost the Earth as fierce a pang 40 As Keats (or was it Milton?) sang It cost her for Enormous Caf. It came near splitting her in half. 'Twas torn from her Pacific side. All the sea water in one tide 45 And all the air rushed to the spot. Believe the Arcadians or not, They saved themselves by hanging on To a plant called the silphion, Which has for its great attribute 50 It can't be pulled up by the root. Men's legs and bodies in the gale Streamed out like pennants swallow-tail. Most of them let go and were gone. But there was this phenomenon: 55 Some of them gave way at the wrist Before they gave way at the fist. In branches of the silphion Is sometimes found a skeleton Of desperately clutching hand 60 Science has failed to understand. One has been lately all the talk In the museum of Antioch. That's how it was from the Pacific.

It needn't be quite so terrific	65
To get another from the Atlantic.	
It needn't be quite so gigantic	
As coming from a lesser ocean.	
Good liberals will object my notion	
Is too hard on the human race.	70
That's something I'm prepared to face.	
It merely would entail the purge	
That the just-pausing Demiurge	
Asks of himself once in so often	
So the firm firmament won't soften.	75
I am assured at any rate	
Man's practically inexterminate.	
Someday I must go into that.	
There's always been an Ararat	
Where someone someone else begat	80
To start the world all over at.	

# HOW HARD IT IS TO KEEP FROM BEING KING WHEN IT'S IN YOU AND IN THE SITUATION

The King said to his son: "Enough of this!
The Kingdom's yours to finish as you please.
I'm getting out tonight. Here, take the crown."

But the Prince drew away his hand in time To avoid what he wasn't sure he wanted. So the crown fell and the crown jewels scattered. And the Prince answered, picking up the pieces, "Sire, I've been looking on, and I don't like The looks of empire here. I'm leaving with you."

So the two making good their abdication Fled from the palace in the guise of men. But they had not walked far into the night Before they sat down weary on a bank	10
Of dusty weeds to take a drink of stars.  And eyeing one he only wished were his, Rigel, Bellatrix, or else Betelgeuse, The ex-King said, "Yon star's indifference Fills me with fear I'll be left to my fate: I needn't think I have escaped my duty,	15
For hard it is to keep from being King When it's in you and in the situation. Witness how hard it was for Julius Caesar. He couldn't keep himself from being King. He had to be stopped by the sword of Brutus.	20
Only less hard was it for Washington.  My crown shall overtake me, you will see;  It will come rolling after us like a hoop."  "Let's not get superstitious, Sire," the Prince said.	25
"We should have brought the crown along to pawn."  "You're right," the ex-King said, "we'll need some money.	30
How would it be for you to take your father To the slave auction in some marketplace And sell him into slavery? My price Should be enough to set you up in business— Or making verse if that is what you're bent on. Don't let your father tell you what to be."	35
The ex-King stood up in the marketplace And tried to look ten thousand dollars' worth. To the first buyer coming by who asked What good he was he boldly said, "I'll tell you:	40

I know the Quintessence of many things.  I know the Quintessence of food, I know The Quintessence of jewels, and I know The Quintessence of horses, men, and women."	
The eunuch laughed: "Well, that's a lot to know. And here's a lot of money. Who's the taker? This larrikin? All right. You come along. You're off to Xanadu to help the cook. I'll try you in the kitchen first on food Since you put food first in your repertory. It seems you call quintessence quintessence."	50
"I'm a Rhodes scholar—that's the reason why. I was at college in the Isle of Rhodes."	
The slave served his novitiate dishwashing. He got his first chance to prepare a meal One day when the chief cook was sick at heart. (The cook was temperamental like the King.) And the meal made the banqueters exclaim And the Great King inquire whose work it was.	55
"A man's out there who claims he knows the secret, Not of food only but of everything, Jewels and horses, women, wine, and song."	60
The King said grandly, "Even as we are fed See that our slave is also. He's in favor. Take notice, Haman, he's in favor with us."	65
There came to court a merchant selling pearls, A smaller pearl he asked a thousand for, A larger one he asked five hundred for. The King sat favoring one pearl for its bigness,	
And then the other for its costliness	. 70

(He seems to have felt limited to one),
Till the ambassadors from Punt or somewhere
Shuffled their feet as if to hint respectfully,
"The choice is not between two pearls, O King,
But between peace and war as we conceive it.
We are impatient for your royal answer."
No estimating how far the entente
Might have deteriorated had not someone
Thought of the kitchen slave and had him in
To put an end to the King's vacillation.

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And the slave said, "The small one's worth the price, But the big one is worthless. Break it open. My head for it—you'll find the big one hollow. Permit me." And he crushed it under his heel And showed them it contained a live teredo.

"But tell us how you knew," Darius cried.

"Oh, from my knowledge of its *quint*essence. I told you I knew the *quint*essence of jewels. But anybody could have guessed in this case, From the pearl's having its own native warmth, Like flesh, there must be something living in it."

"Feed him another feast of recognition."

And so it went with triumph after triumph Till on a day the King, being sick at heart (The King was temperamental like his cook, But nobody had noticed the connection), Sent for the ex-King in a private matter. "You say you know the inwardness of men, As well as of your hundred other things. Dare to speak out and tell me about myself.

What ails me? Tell me. Why am I unhappy?"	
"You're not where you belong. You're not a King Of royal blood. Your father was a cook."	
"You die for that."	
"No, you go ask your mother."	
His mother didn't like the way he put it, "But yes," she said, "someday I'll tell you, dear. You have a right to know your pedigree. You're well descended on your mother's side, Which is unusual. So many Kings	105
Have married beggar maids from off the streets. Your mother's folks——"	110
He stayed to hear no more, But hastened back to reassure his slave That if he had him slain it wouldn't be For having lied but having told the truth. "At least you ought to die for wizardry. But let me into it and I will spare you. How did you know the secret of my birth?"	115
"If you had been a King of royal blood, You'd have rewarded me for all I've done By making me your minister-vizier, Or giving me a nobleman's estate. But all you thought of giving me was food. I picked you out a horse called Safety Third, By Safety Saged Level of Safety First	120
By Safety Second out of Safety First, Guaranteed to come safely off with you From all the fights you had a mind to lose. You could lose battles, you could lose whole wars, You could lose Asia, Africa, and Europe,	125

No one could get you: you would come through s	smiling.
You lost your army at Mosul. What happened? You came companionless, but you came home. Is it not true? And what was my reward? This time an all-night banquet, to be sure, But still food, food. Your one idea was food. None but a cook's son could be so food-minded. I knew your father must have been a cook.	130
I'll bet you anything that's all as King You think of for your people—feeding them."	
But the King said, "Haven't I read somewhere There is no act more kingly than to give?"	140
"Yes, but give character and not just food. A King must give his people character."	
"They can't have character unless they're fed."	
"You're hopeless," said the slave.	
"I guess I am;	
I am abject before you," said Darius. "You know so much, go on, instruct me further. Tell me some rule for ruling people wisely, In case I should decide to reign some more. How shall I give a people character?"	145
"Make them as happy as is good for them. But that's a hard one, for I have to add: Not without consultation with their wishes; Which is the crevice that lets Progress in. If we could only stop the Progress somewhere,	150
At a good point for pliant permanence,	155
Where Madison attempted to arrest it.	
But no, a woman has to be her age,	

A nation has to take its natural course	
Of Progress round and round in circles	
From King to Mob to King to Mob to King	160
Until the eddy of it eddies out."	
"So much for Progress," said Darius meekly.	
"Another word that bothers me is Freedom.	
You're good at maxims. Say me one on Freedom.	
What has it got to do with character?	165
My satrap Tissaphernes has no end	
Of trouble with it in his Grecian cities	
Along the Aegean coast. That's all they talk of."	
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"Behold my son in rags here with his lyre,"	170
The ex-King said. "We're in this thing together.	170
He is the one who took the money for me	
When I was sold—and small reproach to him.	
He's a good boy. 'Twas at my instigation.	,
I looked on it as a Carnegie grant	
For him to make a poet of himself on	175
If such a thing is possible with money.	
Unluckily it wasn't money enough	
To be a test. It didn't last him out.	
And he may have to turn to something else	
To earn a living. I don't interfere.	180
I want him to be anything he has to.	
He has been begging through the Seven Cities	
Where Homer begged. He'll tell you about Freedor	n.
He writes free verse, I'm told, and he is thought	
To be the author of the Seven Freedoms:	185
Free Will, Trade, Verse, Thought, Love, Speech,	Coinage.
(You ought to see the coins done in Cos.)	
His name is Omar. I as a Rhodes scholar	
Pronounce it Homer with a Cockney rough.	

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Freedom is slavery some poets tell us.	190
Enslave yourself to the right leader's truth,	
Christ's or Karl Marx', and it will set you free.	
Don't listen to their play of paradoxes.	
The only certain freedom's in departure.	
My son and I have tasted it and know.	195
We feel it in the moment we depart	
As fly the atomic smithereens to nothing.	
The problem for the King is just how strict	
The lack of liberty, the squeeze of law	
And discipline should be in school and state	200
To insure a jet departure of our going	
Like a pip shot from 'twixt our pinching fingers."	
"All this facility disheartens me.	
Pardon my interruption; I'm unhappy.	
I guess I'll have the headsman execute me	205
And press your father into being King."	
"Don't let him fool you: he's a King already.	
But though almost all-wise, he makes mistakes.	
I'm not a free-verse singer. He was wrong there.	
I claim to be no better than I am.	210
I write real verse in numbers, as they say.	
I'm talking not free verse but blank verse now.	
Regular verse springs from the strain of rhythm	
Unon a meter, strict or loose iambic.	
From that strain comes the expression strains of music.	215
The tune is not that meter, not that rhythm,	
But a resultant that arises from them.	
Tell them Iamb, Jehovah said, and meant it.	
Free verse leaves out the meter and makes up	220
For the deficiency by church intoning.	220
Free verse, so called, is really cherished prose,	

Prose made of, given an air by church intoning.	
It has its beauty, only I don't write it.	
And possibly my not writing it should stop me	
From holding forth on Freedom like a Whitman—	225
A Sandburg. But permit me in conclusion:	
Tell Tissaphernes not to mind the Greeks.	
The freedom they seek is by politics,	
Forever voting and haranguing for it.	
The reason artists show so little interest	230
In public freedom is because the freedom	
They've come to feel the need of is a kind	
No one can give them—they can scarce attain—	
The freedom of their own material:	
So, never at a loss in simile,	235
They can command the exact affinity	
Of anything they are confronted with.	
This perfect moment of unbafflement,	
When no man's name and no noun's adjective	
But summons out of nowhere like a jinni.	240
We know not what we owe this moment to.	
It may be wine, but much more likely love—	
Possibly just well-being in the body,	
Or respite from the thought of rivalry.	
It's what my father must mean by departure,	245
Freedom to flash off into wild connections.	247
Once to have known it, nothing else will do.	
Our days all pass awaiting its return.	
You must have read the famous valentine	
Pericles sent Aspasia in absentia:	250
	250
For God himself the height of feeling free	
Must have been His success in simile	

When at sight of you He thought of me.

Let's see, where are we? Oh, we're in transition,	
Changing an old King for another old one.	255
What an exciting age it is we live in—	
With all this talk about the hope of youth	
And nothing made of youth. Consider me,	
How totally ignored I seem to be.	
No one is nominating me for King.	260
The headsman has Darius by the belt	
To lead him off the Asiatic way	
Into oblivion without a lawyer.	
But that is as Darius seems to want it.	
No fathoming the Asiatic mind.	265
And father's in for what we ran away from.	
And superstition wins. He blames the stars,	
Aldebaran, Capella, Sirius	
(As I remember they were summer stars	
The night we ran away from Ctesiphon),	270
For looking on and not participating.	
(Why are we so resentful of detachment?)	
But don't tell me it wasn't his display	
Of more than royal attributes betrayed him.	
How hard it is to keep from being King	275
When it's in you and in the situation.	
And that is half the trouble with the world	
(Or more than half I'm half inclined to say)."	

## LINES WRITTEN IN DEJECTION ON THE EVE OF GREAT SUCCESS

I once had a cow that jumped over the moon, Not onto the moon but over. I don't know what made her so lunar a loon; All she'd been having was clover.

That was back in the days of my godmother Goose. 5
But though we are goosier now,
And all tanked up with mineral juice,
We haven't caught up with my cow.

#### POSTSCRIPT

But if over the moon I had wanted to go
And had caught my cow by the tail,
I'll bet she'd have made a melodious low
And put her foot in the pail;

Than which there is no indignity worse.

A cow did that once to a fellow

Who rose from the milking stool with a curse

And cried, "I'll larn you to bellow."

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He couldn't lay hands on a pitchfork to hit her Or give her a stab of the tine, So he leapt on her hairy back and bit her Clear into her marrow spine.

No doubt she would have preferred the fork. She let out a howl of rage That was heard as far away as New York And made the papers' front page.

He answered her back, "Well, who begun it?"
That's what at the end of a war
We always say—not who won it,
Or what it was foughten for.

#### THE MILKY WAY IS A COWPATH

On wings too stiff to flap We started to exult In having left the map On journey the penult.

But since we got nowhere, Like small boys we got mad And let go at the air With everything we had.

Incorrigible Quidnuncs, We would see what would come Of pelting heaven with chunks Of crude uranium.

At last in self-collapse We owned up to our wife The Milky Way perhaps Was woman's way of life.

Our un-outwitted spouse Replied she had as soon Believe it was the cow's That overshot the moon.

The parabolic curve Of her celestial track, As any might observe, Might never bring her back.

The famous foster nurse Of man and womankind Had for the universe Left trivia behind; 5

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And gone right on astray Through let-down pasture bars Along the Milky Way A-foraging on stars,	30
Perennial as flowers, To where as some allege This universe of ours Has got a razor edge;	35
And if she don't take care She'll get her gullet cut, But that is no affair Of anybody's but—	40
The author of these words, Whose lifelong unconcern Has been with flocks and herds For what they didn't earn.	
SOME SCIENCE FICTION	
The chance is the remotest Of its going much longer unnoticed That I'm not keeping pace With the headlong human race.	
And some of them may mind My staying back behind To take life at a walk In philosophic talk;	5
Though as yet they only smile At how slow I do a mile,	10

For me as an Old Slow Coach.	
But I know them what they are: As they get more nuclear And more bigoted in reliance On the gospel of modern science,	15
For them my loitering around At less than the speed of sound Or even the speed of light Won't seem unheretical quite.	20
They may end by banishing me To the penal colony They are thinking of pretty soon Establishing on the moon.	
With a can of condensed air I could go almost anywhere, Or rather submit to be sent As a noble experiment.	25
They should try one wastrel first On a landscape so accursed To see how long they should wait Before they make it a state.	30
* * *	
ENVOI TO HYDE THE CASTAWAY OF CROW ISLAND	
I made this you to beguile With some optimism for Christmas On your isle that would be an isle But isn't because of an isthmus.	35

### QUANDARY

Never have I been sad or glad	
That there was such a thing as bad.	
There had to be, I understood,	
For there to have been any good.	
It was by having been contrasted	5
That good and bad so long had lasted.	
That's why discrimination reigns.	
That's why we need a lot of brains	
If only to discriminate	
Twixt what to love and what to hate.	10
To quote the oracle of Delphi,	
Love thou thy neighbor as thyself, aye,	
And hate him as thyself thou hatest.	
There quandary is at its greatest.	
We learned from the forbidden fruit	15
For brains there is no substitute.	
"Unless it's sweetbreads," you suggest	
With innuendo I detest.	
You drive me to confess in ink:	
Once I was fool enough to think	20
That brains and sweetbreads were the same,	
Till I was caught and put to shame,	
First by a butcher, then a cook,	
Then by a scientific book.	
But 'twas by making sweetbreads do	25
I passed with such a high I.O.	

#### A REFLEX

Hear my rigmarole.
Science stuck a pole
Down a likely hole
And he got it bit.
Science gave a stab
And he got a grab.
That was what he got.
"Ah," he said, "Qui vive,
Who goes there, and what
ARE we to believe?
That there is an It?"

\_

#### IN A GLASS OF CIDER

It seemed I was a mite of sediment
That waited for the bottom to ferment
So I could catch a bubble in ascent.
I rode up on one till the bubble burst,
And when that left me to sink back reversed
I was no worse off than I was at first.
I'd catch another bubble if I waited.
The thing was to get now and then elated.

5

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#### FROM IRON

TOOLS AND WEAPONS
To Ahmed S. Bokhari

Nature within her inmost self divides To trouble men with having to take sides.

#### [FOUR-ROOM SHACK...]

Four-room shack aspiring high With an arm of scrawny mast For the visions in the sky That go blindly pouring past. In the ear and in the eye What you get is what to buy. Hope you're satisfied to last.

#### [BUT OUTER SPACE...]

But outer Space, At least this far, For all the fuss Of the populace, Stays more popular Than populous.

5

### ON BEING CHOSEN POET OF VERMONT

Breathes there a bard who isn't moved When he finds his verse is understood And not entirely disapproved By his country and his neighborhood?

#### [WE VAINLY WRESTLE...]

We vainly wrestle with the blind belief That aught we cherish Can ever quite pass out of utter grief And wholly perish.

#### [IT TAKES ALL SORTS...]

It takes all sorts of in- and outdoor schooling To get adapted to my kind of fooling.

#### [IN WINTER IN THE WOODS...]

In winter in the woods alone Against the trees I go. I mark a maple for my own And lay the maple low.

At four o'clock I shoulder ax, And in the afterglow I link a line of shadowy tracks Across the tinted snow.

I see for Nature no defeat
In one tree's overthrow
Or for myself in my retreat
For yet another blow.

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# A Masque of Reason : 1945 :

## THE JAMMU & KASHMIR UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

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#### A MASQUE OF REASON

A fair oasis in the purest desert. A man sits leaning back against a palm. His wife lies by him looking at the sky.

MAN. You're not asleep?

wife. No, I can hear you. Why?

MAN. I said the incense tree's on fire again.

WIFE. You mean the Burning Bush?

MAN. The Christmas Tree.

WIFE. I shouldn't be surprised.

MAN. The strangest light!

WIFE. There's a strange light on everything today.

MAN. The myrrh tree gives it. Smell the rosin burning?

The ornaments the Greek artificers

Made for the Emperor Alexius,

The Star of Bethlehem, the pomegranates,

The birds, seem all on fire with Paradise.

And hark, the gold enameled nightingales

Are singing. Yes, and look, the Tree is troubled.

Someone's caught in the branches.

WIFE.

So there is.

5

10

15

He can't get out.

MAN. He's loose! He's out!

wife. I'd know Him by Blake's Now what's He doing?	It's God. picture anywhere.	
MAN. Here by our atoll.	Pitching throne, I guess,	
wife. Somet	hing Byzantine.	20
That God pulls li	lywood flat, prefabricated, ghtly upright on its hinges e, supporting it in place.)	
Perhaps for an Olympic or Court of Love.	Tournament,	
Or Court of Law, and the I trust it is. Here's where My varying opinion of n	e I lay aside nyself	25
And come to rest in an of Suffer yourself to be adm. As Waller says.		30
And speak to Him befor Tell Him He may reme	mber you: you're Job.	
How are you now? I tru And feel no ill effects fr		35
JOB. Gave me in truth I am a name for being I But, yes, I'm fine, excep	: I like the frank admission.  out upon.  t for now and then	
A reminiscent twinge of The letup's heavenly. Ye	rheumatism.	40

Escape from so great pains of life on earth It gives a sense of letup calculated To last a fellow to Eternity. 45 GOD. Yes, by and by. But first a larger matter. I've had you on my mind a thousand years To thank you someday for the way you helped me Establish once for all the principle There's no connection man can reason out 50 Between his just deserts and what he gets. Virtue may fail and wickedness succeed. Twas a great demonstration we put on. I should have spoken sooner had I found The word I wanted. You would have supposed 55 One who in the beginning was the Word Would be in a position to command it. I have to wait for words like anyone. Too long I've owed you this apology For the apparently unmeaning sorrow 60 You were afflicted with in those old days. But it was of the essence of the trial You shouldn't understand it at the time. It had to seem unmeaning to have meaning. And it came out all right. I have no doubt 65 You realize by now the part you played To stultify the Deuteronomist And change the tenor of religious thought. My thanks are to you for releasing me From moral bondage to the human race. 70 The only free will there at first was man's. Who could do good or evil as he chose. I had no choice but I must follow him

If that is all there is to be of Heaven.

With forfeits and rewards he understood— Unless I liked to suffer loss of worship. 75 I had to prosper good and punish evil. You changed all that. You set me free to reign. You are the Emancipator of your God. And as such I promote you to a saint. JOB. You hear Him, Thyatira: we're a saint. 80 Salvation in our case is retroactive. We're saved, we're saved, whatever else it means. 10B's WIFE. Well, after all these years! This is my wife. JOB. JOB'S WIFE. If You're the deity I assume You are (I'd know You by Blake's picture anywhere)— 85 GOD. The best, I'm told, I ever have had taken. JOB'S WIFE. —I have a protest I would lodge with You. I want to ask You if it stands to reason That women prophets should be burned as witches, Whereas men prophets are received with honor. 90 JOB. Except in their own country, Thyatira. cop. You're not a witch? No. TOB'S WIFE. Have you ever been one? GOD. Sometimes she thinks she has and gets herself Worked up about it. But she really hasn't-Not in the sense of having to my knowledge 95

Predicted anything that came to pass.

JOB'S WIFE. The Witch of Endor was a friend of mine.

GOD. You wouldn't say she fared so very badly. I noticed when she called up Samuel His spirit had to come. Apparently A witch was stronger than a prophet there.

100

105

Joв's wife. But she was burned for witchcraft.

GOD.

Of record in my Note Book.

That is not

TOP'S WIFE

JOB'S WIFE. Well, she was. And I should like to know the reason why.

GOD. There you go asking for the very thing We've just agreed I didn't have to give.—

(The throne collapses. But He picks it up And this time locks it up and leaves it.)

Where has she been the last half hour or so?
She wants to know why there is still injustice.

I answer flatly: That's the way it is,
And bid my will avouch it like Macbeth.

We may as well go back to the beginning
And look for justice in the case of Segub.

Joв. Oh, Lord, let's not go back to anything.

115

GOD. Because your wife's past won't bear looking into?—In our great moment what did you do, Madam?
What did you try to make your husband say?

JOB'S WIFE. No, let's not live things over. I don't care.
I stood by Job. I may have turned on You.

120
Job scratched his boils and tried to think what he
Had done or not done to or for the poor.
The test is always how we treat the poor.
It's time the poor were treated by the state

In some way not so penal as the poorhouse. That's one thing more to put on Your agenda. Job hadn't done a thing, poor innocent. I told him not to scratch: it made it worse. If I said once I said a thousand times,	125
Don't scratch! And when, as rotten as his skin, His tents blew all to pieces, I picked up Enough to build him every night a pup tent Around him so it wouldn't touch and hurt him. I did my wifely duty. I should tremble!	130
All You can seem to do is lose Your temper When reason-hungry mortals ask for reasons. Of course, in the abstract high singular There isn't any universal reason;	135
And no one but a man would think there was. You don't catch women trying to be Plato. Still there must be lots of unsystematic Stray scraps of palliative reason It wouldn't hurt You to vouchsafe the faithful.	140
You thought it was agreed You needn't give them. You thought to suit Yourself. I've not agreed To anything with anyone.	145
You go to sleep. God must await events, As well as words.	
JOB'S WIFE. I'm serious. God's had Aeons of time and still it's mostly women Get burned for prophecy, men almost never.	150
JOB. God needs time just as much as you or I To get things done. Reformers fail to see that.— She'll go to sleep. Nothing keeps her awake	

But physical activity, I find. Try to read to her and she drops right off.	155
GOD. She's beautiful.	
JOB. Yes, she was just remarking She now felt younger by a thousand years Than the day she was born.	
That's about right, I should have said. You got your age reversed When time was found to be a space dimension That could, like any space, be turned around in?	160
JOB. Yes, both of us: we saw to that at once. But, God, I have a question too to raise. (My wife gets in ahead of me with hers.)	
I need some help about this reason problem Before I am too late to be got right	165
As to what reasons I agree to waive. I'm apt to string along with Thyatira. God knows—or rather, You know (God forgive me)	
I waived the reason for my ordeal—but— I have a question even there to ask— In confidence. There's no one here but her, And she's a woman: she's not interested	170
In general ideas and principles.	174
GOD. What are her interests, Job?	
JOB. Witch-women's right Humor her there or she will be confirmed In her suspicion You're no feminist. You have it in for women, she believes. Kipling invokes You as Lord God of Hosts.	ts.
She'd like to know how You would take a prayer	180

That started off Lord God of Hostesses.

GOD. I'm charmed with her.

Jов. Yes, I could see You were.

But to my question. I am much impressed With what You say we have established, Between us, You and I.

I make you see?

It would be too bad if Columbus-like

You failed to see the worth of your achievement.

185

тов. You call it mine.

GOD. We groped it out together.

Any originality it showed I give you credit for. My forte is truth,

give you credit for. My forte is truth,

Or metaphysics, long the world's reproach For standing still in one place true forever;

While science goes self-superseding on.

Look at how far we've left the current science

Of Genesis behind. The wisdom there, though,

Is just as good as when I uttered it.

Still, novelty has doubtless an attraction.

JOB. So it's important who first thinks of things?

GOD. I'm a great stickler for the author's name.

By proper names I find I do my thinking.

JOB'S WIFE. God, who invented earth?

JOB. What, still awake?

GOD. Any originality it showed Was of the Devil. He invented Hell, False premises that are the original

Of all originality, the sin That felled the angels, Wolsey should have said. As for the earth, we groped that out together, Much as your husband, Job, and I together Found out the discipline man needed most Was to learn his submission to unreason; And that for man's own sake as well as mine, So he won't find it hard to take his orders From his inferiors in intelligence In peace and war—especially in war.	210
JOB. So he won't find it hard to take his war.	215
GOD. You have the idea. There's not much I can tell yo	ou.
Joв. All very splendid. I am flattered proud To have been in on anything with You. 'Twas a great demonstration if You say so. Though incidentally I sometimes wonder Why it had had to be at my expense.	220
GOD. It had to be at somebody's expense. Society can never think things out: It has to see them acted out by actors, Devoted actors at a sacrifice— The ablest actors I can lay my hands on. Is that your answer?	225
To ask my question. We disparage reason. But all the time it's what we're most concerned with. There's will as motor and there's will as brakes. Reason is, I suppose, the steering gear. The will as brakes can't stop the will as motor For very long. We're plainly made to go.	230

We're going anyway and may as well	
Have some say as to where we're headed for;	235
Just as we will be talking anyway	
And may as well throw in a little sense.	
Let's do so now. Because I let You off	
From telling me Your reason, don't assume	
I thought You had none. Somewhere back	240
I knew You had one. But this isn't it	
You're giving me. You say we groped this out.	
But if You will forgive me the irreverence,	
It sounds to me as if You thought it out,	
And took Your time to it. It seems to me	245
An afterthought, a long-long-after-thought.	
I'd give more for one least beforehand reason	
Than all the justifying ex-post-facto	
Excuses trumped up by You for theologists.	
The front of being answerable to no one	250
I'm with You in maintaining to the public.	
But, Lord, we showed them what. The audience	
Has all gone home to bed. The play's played out.	
Come, after all these years—to satisfy me.	
I'm curious. And I'm a grown-up man:	255
I'm not a child for You to put me off	
And tantalize me with another "Oh, because."	
You'd be the last to want me to believe	
All Your effects were merely lucky blunders.	
That would be unbelief and atheism.	260
The artist in me cries out for design.	
Such devilish ingenuity of torture	
Did seem unlike You, and I tried to think	
The reason might have been some other person's.	
But there is nothing You are not behind.	265
I did not ask then, but it seems as if	

Now after all these years You might indulge me. Why did You hurt me so? I am reduced To asking flatly for the reason—outright. 269 I'd tell you, Job—— All right, don't tell me, then, JOB. If you don't want to. I don't want to know. But what is all this secrecy about? I fail to see what fun, what satisfaction A God can find in laughing at how badly Men fumble at the possibilities 275 When left to guess forever for themselves. The chances are when there's so much pretense Of metaphysical profundity The obscurity's a fraud to cover nothing. I've come to think no so-called hidden value's 280 Worth going after. Get down into things, It will be found there's no more given there Than on the surface. If there ever was. The crypt was long since rifled by the Greeks. We don't know where we are, or who we are. 285 We don't know one another: don't know You: Don't know what time it is. We don't know, don't we? Who says we don't? Who got up these misgivings? Oh, we know well enough to go ahead with. I mean we seem to know enough to act on. 290 It comes down to a doubt about the wisdom Of having children—after having had them, So there is nothing we can do about it But warn the children they perhaps should have none. You could end this by simply coming out 295

And saying plainly and unequivocally

Whether there's any part of man immortal.

Yet You don't speak. Let fools bemuse themselves By being baffled for the sake of being. I'm sick of the whole artificial puzzle.	300
JOB'S WIFE. You won't get any answers out of God.	
GOD. My kingdom, what an outbreak!	
JOB'S WIFE. Job is right. Your kingdom, yes, Your kingdom come on earth.	
Pray tell me what does that mean? Anything? Perhaps that earth is going to crack someday Like a big egg and hatch a heaven out	305
Of all the dead and buried from their graves.  One simple little statement from the throne  Would put an end to such fantastic nonsense;	
And, too, take care of twenty of the four And twenty freedoms on the party docket.	310
Or is it only four? My extra twenty Are freedoms from the need of asking questions.  (I hope You know the game called twenty questions.) For instance, is there such a thing as Progress?  Job says there's no such thing as Earth's becoming An easier place for man to save his soul in.	315
Except as a hard place to save his soul in, A trial ground where he can try himself And find out whether he is any good, It would be meaningless. It might as well Be Heaven at once and have it over with.	320
One at a time, please. I will answer Job first. I'm going to tell Job why I tortured him, And trust it won't be adding to the torture. I was just showing off to the Devil, Job,	325

(Job takes a few steps pacing.) Do you mind? (God eyes him anxiously.) No. No. I mustn't. JOB. 330 'Twas human of You. I expected more Than I could understand and what I get Is almost less than I can understand. But I don't mind. Let's leave it as it stood. The point was it was none of my concern. 335 I stick to that. But talk about confusion!— How is that for a mix-up, Thyatira?— Yet I suppose what seems to us confusion Is not confusion, but the form of forms, The serpent's tail stuck down the serpent's throat, 340 Which is the symbol of eternity And also of the way all things come round, Or of how rays return upon themselves, To quote the greatest Western poem yet. Though I hold rays deteriorate to nothing: 345 First white, then red, then ultrared, then out. Job, you must understand my provocation. The tempter comes to me and I am tempted. I'd had about enough of his derision Of what I valued most in human nature. 350 He thinks he's smart. He thinks he can convince me It is no different with my followers From what it is with his. Both serve for pay. Disinterestedness never did exist. And if it did, it wouldn't be a virtue. 355 Neither would fairness. You have heard the doctrine. It's on the increase. He could count on no one:

As is set forth in Chapters One and Two.

That was his lookout. I could count on you.

I wanted him forced to acknowledge so much. I gave you over to him, but with safeguards. 360 I took care of you. And before you died I trust I made it clear I took your side Against your comforters in their contention You must be wicked to deserve such pain. That's Browning and sheer Chapel Non-conformism. 365 JOB. God, please, enough for now. I'm in no mood For more excuses. What I mean to say: GOD. Your comforters were wrong. Oh, that committee! JOB. I saw you had no fondness for committees. Next time you find yourself pressed onto one 370 For the revision of the Book of Prayer Put that in if it isn't in already: Deliver us from committees. Twill remind me. I would do anything for you in reason. Yes, yes. TOB. You don't seem satisfied. GOD. I am. 375 JOB. You're pensive. Oh, I'm thinking of the Devil. TOB. You must remember he was in on this. We can't leave him out. No. No, we don't need to. GOD. We're too well off. Someday we three should have JOB.

A good old get-together celebration.

380

GOD. Why not right now?

јов.

We can't without the Devil.

GOD. The Devil's never very far away.

He too is pretty circumambient.

He has but to appear. He'll come for me,

Precipitated from the desert air.—

385

Show yourself, son.—I'll get back on my throne

For this I think. I find it always best

To be upon my dignity with him.

(The Devil enters like a sapphire wasp That flickers mica wings. He lifts a hand To brush away a disrespectful smile. Job's wife sits up.)

390

JOB'S WIFE.

Well, if we aren't all here,

Including me, the only Dramatis

Personae needed to enact the problem.

Joв. We've waked her up.

JOB'S WIFE.

I haven't been asleep.

395

I've heard what you were saying—every word.

JOB. What did we say?

TOB'S WIFE.

You said the Devil's in it.

JOB. She always claims she hasn't been asleep.—And what else did we say?

Job's wife.

Well, what led up-

Something about—(The three men laugh.)

400

—The Devil's being God's best inspiration.

Joв. Good, pretty good. TOB'S WIFE. Wait till I get my Kodak.— Would you two please draw in a little closer? No—no, that's not a smile there. That's a grin. Satan, what ails you? Where's the famous tongue, 405 Thou onetime Prince of Conversationists? This is polite society you're in, Where good and bad are mingled every which way, And ears are lent to any sophistry Just as if nothing mattered but our manners. 410 You look as if you either hoped or feared You were more guilty of mischief than you are. Nothing has been brought out that for my part I'm not prepared for or that Job himself Won't find a formula for taking care of. 415

SATAN. Like the one Milton found to fool himself About his blindness.

That strain again! Give me excess of it!
As dulcet as a pagan temple gong!
He's twitting us.—Oh, by the way, you haven't
By any chance a Lady Apple on you?
I saw a boxful in the Christmas market.
How I should prize one personally from you.

GOD. Don't *you* twit. He's unhappy. Church neglect And figurative use have pretty well Reduced him to a shadow of himself.

425

JOB'S WIFE. That explains why he's so diaphanous And easy to see through. But where's he off to? I thought there were to be festivities

Of some kind. We could have charades.	430
GOD. He has his business he must be about.  Job mentioned him, and so I brought him in,  More to give his reality its due  Than anything.	
JOB'S WIFE. He's very real to me And always will be.—Please don't go. Stay, stay But to the evensong, and having played Together we will go with you along. There are who won't have had enough of you If you go now.—Look how he takes no steps! He isn't really going, yet he's leaving.	435 440
Job. (Who has been standing dazed with new ideas) He's on that tendency that like the Gulf Stream, Only of sand, not water, runs through here. It has a rate distinctly different From the surrounding desert; just today I stumbled over it and got tripped up.	445
JOB'S WIFE. Oh, yes, that tendency!—Oh, do come off Don't let it carry you away. I hate A tendency. The minute you get on one It seems to start right off accelerating. Here, take my hand.	it. 450
(He takes it and alights In three quick steps as off an escalator. The tendency, a long, long narrow strip Of middle-aisle church carpet, sisal hemp, Is worked by hands invisible, offstage.) I want you in my group beside the throne— Must have you. There, that's just the right arrangement.	455

Now someone can light up the Burning Bush	
And turn the gold enameled artificial birds on.	
I recognize them. Greek artificers	460
Devised them for Alexius Comnenus.	
They won't show in the picture. That's too bad.	
Neither will I show. That's too bad moreover.	
Now if you three have settled anything	
You'd as well smile as frown on the occasion.	465

(Here endeth Chapter Forty-three of Job.)

# A Masque of Mercy : 1947:

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#### A MASQUE OF MERCY

A bookstore late at night. The Keeper's wife Pulls down the window curtain on the door And locks the door. One customer, locked in, Stays talking with the Keeper at a showcase. The Keeper's wife has hardly turned away Before the door's so violently tried It makes her move as if to reinforce it.

5

JESSE BEL. You can't come in! (Knock, knock) The store is closed!

PAUL. Late, late, too late, you cannot enter now.

JESSE BEL. We can't be always selling people things. 10 He doesn't go.

KEEPER. You needn't be so stern. Open enough to find out who it is.

JESSE BEL. Keeper, you come and see. Or you come, Paul. Our second second-childhood case tonight.

Where do these senile runaways escape from?

15
Wretchedness in a stranger frightens me
More than it touches me.

PAUL.

You may come in.

FUGITIVE. (Entering hatless in a whirl of snow) God's after me!

JESSE BEL. You mean the Devil is.

FUGITIVE. No, God.

FUCITIVE. Haven't you heard of Thompson's "Hound of Heaven"?

PAUL. "I fled Him, down the nights and down the days; I fled Him, down the arches of the years."

KEEPER. This is a bookstore—not a sanctuary.

JESSE BEL. I thought you just now said it was a gift shop.

KEEPER. Don't you be bitter about it. I'm not bitter. 26

FUGITIVE. Well, I could use a book.

KEEPER.

What book?

FUGITIVE.

A Bible.

35

40

Which is what people use it for too often—
And why we wouldn't have one in the store.

We don't believe the common man should read it.

Let him seek his religion in the Church.

JESSE BEL. Keeper, be still.—Pay no attention to him. He's being a religious snob for fun.
The name his mother gave him is to blame
For Keeper's levity: My Brother's Keeper.
She didn't do it to him to be quaint,
But out of politics. She told me so.

She was left over from the Brook Farm venture.

KEEPER. Why is God after you?—to save your soul?

FUGITIVE. No, make me prophesy.

JESSE BEL.

And—you—just—won't?

FUGITIVE. Haven't you noticed anything (hear that!) Since I came in?

KEEPER. Hear what? That army truck?

I just thought if you had a copy handy,
I could point out my sort of passport in it.
There is a story you may have forgotten
About a whale.

45

50

55

60

KEEPER. Oh, you mean *Moby Dick*By Rockwell Kent that everybody's reading.
Trust me to help you find the book you want.

JESSE BEL. Keeper, be still. He knows what book he wants. He said the Bible.

With the suspicion at this hour of night That I might be a confidence impostor. I'm Jonas Dove—if that is any help.

PAUL. Which is the same as saying Jonah, Jonah—Ah, Jonah, Jonah—twice—reproachfully.

FUGITIVE. Spare me the setting of my fate to music. How did you know that way to break my heart? Who are you?

PAUL. Who are you?

JONAH. I think you know, You seem so ready at translating names. Unless I'm much mistaken in myself This is the seventh time I have been sent To prophesy against the city evil.

KEEPER. What have you got against the city?		
JONAH. He knows.		
We have enough against it, haven't we? Cursed be the era that congested it.		
KEEPER. Come, come, you talk like an agrarian.  The city is all right. To live in one Is to be civilized, stay up and read  Or sing and dance all night and see sunrise By waiting up instead of getting up.  The country's only useful as a place	70	
To rest at times from being civilized. You take us two, we're losers in this store, So losers in the city, but we're game: We don't go back on grapes we couldn't reach. We blame ourselves. We're good sports, aren't we, Bel?		
JESSE BEL. I'm not a sport and don't pretend I am one.— It's only fair to Keeper to inform you His favorite reading is seed catalogues. When he gets too agrarian for me I take to drink—at least I take a drink.	<del></del> 80	
(She has her own glass in a vacant chair.)		
PAUL. She'll take to drink and see how we like that.	85	
KEEPER. Bel is a solitary social drinker.  She doesn't mind not offering a drink  To anyone around when she is drinking.		
JESSE BEL. We're poor—that's why. My man can't earn a living.		
KEEPER. Is it just any city you're against	90	
JONAH. Yes, but New York will do as an example.		

KEEPER. Well, you're as good as in New York this minute— Or bad as in New York.

I know I am. JONAH. That was where my engagement was to speak This very night. I had the hall all hired, 95 The audience assembled. There I was Behind the scenes, ordained and advertised To prophesy, and full of prophecy, Yet could not bring myself to say a word. I left light shining on an empty stage 100 And fled to you. But you receive me not.

KEEPER. Yes, we do too, with sympathy, my friend. Your righteous indignation fizzled out, Or else you were afraid of being mobbed If what you had to say was disagreeable.

JESSE BEL. Your courage failed. The saddest thing in life Is that the best thing in it should be courage. Them is my sentiments, and, Mr. Flood, Since you propose it, I believe I will.

Please, someone understand. JONAH.

I understand. PAUL.

110

105

IONAH. These others don't.

You don't yourself entirely. PAUL.

JONAH. What don't I understand? It's easy enough. I'm in the Bible, all done out in story. I've lost my faith in God to carry out The threats He makes against the city evil. 115 I can't trust God to be unmerciful

You've lost your faith in God? How wicked of you.

JESSE BEL. You naughty kitten, you shall have no pie.	
PAUL. Keeper's the kind of Unitarian Who having by elimination got From many gods to Three, and Three to One, Thinks why not taper off to none at all, Except as father putative to sort of Legitimize the brotherhood of man, So we can hang together in a strike.	120
You don't know Paul: he's in the Bible too.  He is the fellow who theologized  Christ almost out of Christianity.  Look out for him.	
I'm going to tell you something, Jonas Dove. I'm going to take the nonsense out of you And give you rest, poor Wandering Jew.	130
JONAH. I'm not The Wandering Jew—I'm who I say I am, A prophet with the Bible for credentials.	135
PAUL. I never said you weren't. I recognized you. You are the universal fugitive— Escapist, as we say—though you are not Running away from Him you think you are,	
But from His mercy-justice contradiction.  Mercy and justice are a contradiction.  But here's where your evasion has an end.  I have to tell you something that will spoil	140
Indulgence in your form of melancholy Once and for all. I'm going to make you see	145

How relatively little justice matters.

JONAH. I see what you are up to: robbing me Of my incentive—canceling my mission.

PAUL. I am empowered to excuse you from it.

JONAH. You! Who are you? I asked you once before. 150 JESSE BEL. He is our analyst.

JONAH. Your analyst?

KEEPER. Who keeps our bookstore annals.

JESSE BEL. Stop it, Keeper.—An analyst's the latest thing in doctors.
He's mine. That's what he is (you asked)—my doctor.
I'm sick.

JONAH. Of what?

JESSE BEL. Oh, everything, I guess.

The doctors say the trouble with me is
I'm not in love. I didn't love the doctor
I had before. That's why I changed to Paul—
To try another.

PAUL. Jesse Bel's a girl
Whose cure will lie in getting her idea
Of the word love corrected. She got off
To a bad start it seems in the wrong school
Of therapy.

JESSE BEL. I don't love Paul—as yet.

JONAH. How about loving God?

JESSE BEL. You make me shrug.—
And I don't love you either, do I, Keeper? 165

KEEPER. Don't lay your hand on me to say it, shameless. Let me alone.

JESSE BEL. I'm sick. Joe's sick. The world's sick. I'll take to drink—at least I'll take a drink.

JONAH. My name's not Joe. I don't like what she says.

It's Greenwich Village cocktail-party talk—

Big-city talk. I'm getting out of here.

"I'm—bound—away!" (He quotes it to the tune.)

You locked the door, Bel. Let me have the key.

(He goes and takes it from the door himself.) 175
JONAH. Then I'm a prisoner?

PAUL. You are tonight. We take it you were sent in here for help. And help you're going to get.

I'll break your door down. IONAH. Always the same when I set out in flight. I take the first boat. God puts up a storm 180 That someone in the crew connects with me. The sailors throw me overboard for luck, Or, as you might say, throw me to the whale— For me to disagree with him and get spit out Right back in the same trouble I was in. 185 You're modern; so the whale you throw me to Will be some soulless lunatic asylum— For me to disagree with any science There may be there and get spit out again. JESSE BEL. You poor, poor swallowable little man. 190

If you would take the hands out of your hair

And calm yourself. Be sane! I hereby hold Your forearms in the figure of a cross The way it rested two points on the ground At every station but the final one.	195
JONAH. What good is that?	
PAUL. I'll make you see what	at good.
JONAH. I am sick, as she says. Nothing exhausts the Like working myself up to prophesy And then not prophesying. (He sits down.)	me 199
JESSE BEL. Can you interpret dreams? I dreamed Someone took curved nail-scissors and snipped off My eyelids so I couldn't shut my eyes To anything that happened anymore.	last night
JONAH. She's had some loss she can't accept from Is that it? Some Utopian belief— Or child, and this is motherly resentment?	God— 205
JESSE BEL. You look so sleepless.—If he'd promis To go straight home, we wouldn't keep him, wouldn't keep him, wouldn't won?	
JONAH. Under the bandstand in Suburban Park.	210
JESSE BEL. Why, what a story. At this time of ye There's not a footprint to it in the snow.	ar
You can't trust God to be unmerciful.  There you have the beginning of all wisdom.	215
KEEPER. One minute, may I, Paul?—before we le Religion for these philosophic matters. That's the right style of coat for prophecy	eave

You're sporting there. I'll bet you're good at it. Shall it be told we had a prophet captive And let him get off without prophesying? Let's have some prophecy. What form of ruin (For ruin I assume was what it was) Had you in mind to visit on the city, Rebellion, pestilence, invasion?	220
JONAH. Earthquake Was what I thought of.	225
Have you any grounds, Or undergrounds, for confidence in earthquake?	
JONAH. It's good geology—the Funday Fault, A fracture in the rocks beneath New York That only needs a finger touch from God To spring it like a deadfall and the fault In nature would wipe out all human fault. (He stops to listen.) That's a mighty storm, And we are shaken. But it isn't earthquake. Another possibility I thought of—	230
(He stops to listen and his unspoken thought, Projected from the lantern of his eyes, Is thrown in script, as at Belshazzar's feast, On the blank curtain on the outer door.)	
—Was Babel: everyone developing A language of his own to write his book in, And one to cap the climax by combining All language in a one-man tongue-confusion.	240
(He starts to speak, but stops again to listen. The writing on the screen must change too fast For any but the rapidest eye readers.)	245

Suspicion of the income-tax returns, A question who was getting the most out Of business, might increase into a madness. The mob might hold a man up in the streets And tear his clothes off to examine him To find if there were pockets in his skin, As in a smuggler's at the diamond fields, Where he was hoarding more than they enjoyed.	250
PAUL. We can all see what's passing in your mind.  (I won't have Keeper calling it religion.)  It's a hard case. It's got so prophecy  Is a disease of your imagination.  You're so lost in the virtuosity  Of getting up good ruins, you've forgotten  What the sins are men ought to perish for.	255 260
JONAH. You wrong me.	
Well then, name a single sin.	
JONAH. Another possibility I thought of-	
JESSE BEL. There he goes off into another trance.	
KEEPER. You stick to earthquake, you have something there— Something we'll know we're getting when we get it.	265
PAUL. (Taking a walk off down the store distressed) Keeper, I'll turn on you if you keep on.	
KEEPER. If I were in your place, though, Mr. Prophet, I'd want to be more certain I was called, Before I undertook so delicate A mission as to have to tell New York 'Twas in for an old-fashioned shaking down	270

Like the one Joshua gave Jericho.

You wouldn't want the night clubs laughing at you.

275

JESSE BEL. Or The New Yorker.

KEEPER. When was the last time

You heard from God—I mean had orders from Him?

JONAH. I'm hearing from Him now, did you but notice. Don't any of you hear a sound?

KEEPER.

The storm!

Merely the windows rattling in the storm.

280

Trucks going by to war. A war is on.

JONAH. That is no window. That's a showcase rattling. That is your antiques rattling on a shelf.

JESSE BEL. You're doing it.

JONAH.

I'm not. How could I be?

JESSE BEL. You're doing something to our minds.

JONAH.

I'm not.—

Don't you feel something?

PAUL.

Leave me out of this.

286

(He leans away in tolerant distaste.)

JONAH. And here come all your Great Books tumbling down!

You see the Lord God is a jealous God!

He wrote one book. Let there be no more written.

290

How are their volumes fallen!

KEEPER.

Only one!

JONAH. Hold on there. Leave that open where it lies.

Be careful not to lose the place. Be careful. Please let me have it. Read us what it says. JESSE BEL. Look, will you look! God can't put words in my mouth. 295 My tongue's my own, as True Thomas used to say. So vou've been Bohning up on Thomism too. Someone else read it. TONAH. No, you read it to us. KEEPER. And if it's prophecy, we'll see what happens. 299 JONAH. Nothing would happen. That's the thing of it. God comes on me to doom a city for Him. But oh, no, not for Jonah. I refuse To be the bearer of an empty threat. He may be God, but me, I'm only human: I shrink from being publicly let down. 305 Is this the love of God you preached to me? TESSE BEL. JONAH. There's not the least lack of the love of God In what I say. Don't be so silly, woman. His very weakness for mankind's endearing. I love and fear Him. Yes, but I fear for Him. 310 I don't see how it can be to His interest. This modern tendency I find in Him

KEEPER. You know what lets us off from being careful? The thing that did what you consider mischief, That ushered in this modern lenience,

315

To take the punishment out of all failure To be strong, careful, thrifty, diligent, Anything we once thought we had to be.

Was the discovery of fire insurance. The future state is springing even now From the discovery that loss from failure, By being spread out over everybody, Can be made negligible.	320
What's your book? What's this?	
JONAH. Don't lose the place.	
PAUL. Old Dana Lyle, Who reconciled the Pentateuch with science.	325
JONAH. Where shall I start in? Where my eyes fell fi It seems to be a chapter head in meter.	rst?
JESSE BEL. It's too big for him. Help him hold it up.	
JONAH. Someone else read it.	
KEEPER. No, you asked for it.	
JESSE BEL. Come on, or we'll begin to be afraid.	330
JONAH. Well, but remember this is unofficial: "The city's grotesque iron skeletons Would knock their drunken penthouse heads together	
And cake their concrete dirt off in the streets."  Then further down it seems to start from where The city is admittedly an evil:	335
"O city on insecure rock pedestal, So knowing—and yet needing to be told The thought that added cubits to your height Would better have been taken to your depth." (A whole shelf cascades down.) Here come some more. The folly crashes and the dust goes up.	340

(When the dust settles it should be apparent	
Something has altered in the outer door.)	344
JESSE BEL. Mercy, for mercy's sake!	
KEEPER. Bel wants some m Kneel to your doctor. He dispenses mercy.—	iercy
You're working it, old man. Don't be discouraged.	
JONAH. This isn't it. I haven't prophesied. This is God at me in my skulking place, Trying to flush me out. That's all it is.	350
KEEPER. It's nothing but the Lending Library. All secondhand. Don't get excited, folks; The one indecency's to make a fuss About our own or anybody's end.	
JONAH. It's nothing I brought on by words of mine.	355
KEEPER. You know, there may have been a small tem	blor.

KEEPE If so, it will be in tomorrow's paper.

Now if we've had enough of sacrilege, We can go back to where we started from. Let me repeat: I'm glad to hear you say 360 You can't trust God to be unmerciful. What would you have God if not merciful?

JONAH. Just, I would have Him just before all else, To see that the fair fight is really fair. Then he could enter on the stricken field 365 After the fight's so definitely done There can be no disputing who has won— Then he could enter on the stricken field As Red Cross Ambulance Commander-in-Chief To ease the more extremely wounded out 370 And mend the others up to go again.

PAUL. I thought as much. You have it all arranged,
Only to see it shattered every day.
You should be an authority on Mercy.
That book of yours in the Old Testament
Is the first place in literature, I think,
Where Mercy is explicitly the subject.
I say you should be proud of having beaten
The Gospels to it. After doing Justice justice
Milton's pentameters go on to say,
But Mercy first and last shall brightest shine—
Not only last, but first, you will observe;
Which spoils your figure of the ambulance.

KEEPER. Paul only means you make too much of justice.

There's some such thing and no one will deny it—

385

Enough to bait the trap of the ideal

From which there can be no escape for us

But by our biting off our adolescence

And leaving it behind us in the trap.

JONAH. Listen, ye! It's the proletariat!

A revolution's coming down the street!

Lights out, I say, so's to escape attention.

(He snaps one bulb off. Paul snaps on another.)

There's nothing coming on us, is there, Paul?

We've had about enough of these sensations.

It's a coincidence, but we were on

The subject of the workers' revolution

When you came in. We're revolutionists.

Or Keeper is a revolutionist.

Paul almost had poor Keeper in a corner

Where he would have to quit his politics
Or be a Christian.—Paul, I wish you'd say
That over. I shall have to retail it
To some of Keeper's friends that come in here,
A bunch of small-time revolutionaries.—
Paul makes it come out so they look like Christians.
How they'll like that. Paul said conservatives—
You say it, Paul.

You mean about success. PAUL. And how by its own logic it concentrates 410 All wealth and power in too few hands? The rich in seeing nothing but injustice In their impoverishment by revolution Are right. But 'twas intentional injustice. It was their justice being mercy-crossed. 415 The revolution Keeper's bringing on Is nothing but an outbreak of mass mercy, Too long pent up in rigorous convention— A holy impulse towards redistribution. To set out to homogenize mankind 420 So that the cream could never rise again Required someone who laughingly could play With the idea of justice in the courts, Could mock at riches in the right it claims To count on justice to be merely just. 425 But we are talking over Jonah's head. Or clear off what we know his interests are. Still, not so far off, come to think of it. There is some justice, even as Keeper says. The thing that really counts, though, is the form 430 Of outrage—violence—that breaks across it. The very sleep we sleep is an example.

So that because we're always starting fresh The best minds are the best at premises. And the most sacred thing of all's abruption. And if you've got to see your justice crossed (And you've got to), which will you prefer To see it, evil-crossed or mercy-crossed?	435
KEEPER. We poets offer you another: star-crossed. Of star-crossed, mercy-crossed, or evil-crossed I choose the star-crossed as a star-crossed lover.	440
JONAH. I think my trouble's with the crisises Where mercy-crossed to me seemed evil-crossed.	
KEEPER. Good for you, Jonah. That's what I've been saying.  For instance, when to purify the Itzas They took my love and threw her down a well.	445
JESSE BEL. If it is me in my last incarnation He's thinking of, it wasn't down a well, But in a butt of malmsey I was drowned.	
JONAH. Why do you call yourself a star-crossed lover?	450
KEEPER. Not everything I say is said in scorn. Some people want you not to understand them, But I want you to understand me wrong.	
JONAH. I noticed how he just now made you out A revolutionary—which of course you can't be.	455
No revolution I brought on would aim At anything but change of personnel. The Andrew Jackson slogan of Væ Victis	
Or "Turn the rescals out" would do for me.	460

PAUL. Don't you be made feel small by all this posing.	
Both of them caught it from Bel's favorite poet,	
Who in his favorite pose as poet-thinker	
(His was the doctrine of the Seven Poses)	
Once charged the Nazarene with having brought	465
A darkness out of Asia that had crossed	
Old Attic grace and Spartan discipline	
With violence. The Greeks were hardly strangers	
To the idea of violence. It flourished,	
Persisting from old Chaos in their myth,	470
To embroil the very gods about their spheres	
Of influence. It's been a commonplace	
Ever since Alexander Greeced the world.	
Twere nothing new if that were all Christ brought.	
Christ came to introduce a break with logic	475
That made all other outrage seem as child's play:	
The Mercy on the Sin against the Sermon.	
Strange no one ever thought of it before Him.	
Twas lovely and its origin was love.	479

KEEPER. We know what's coming now.

PAUL. You say it, Keeper, If you have learned your lesson. Don't be bashful.

KEEPER. Paul's constant theme. The Sermon on the Mount Is just a frame-up to insure the failure
Of all of us, so all of us will be
Thrown prostrate at the Mercy Seat for Mercy.

485

JESSE BEL. Yes, Paul, you do say things like that sometimes.

PAUL. You all have read the Sermon on the Mount. I ask you all to read it once again.

(They put their hands together like a book And hold it up nearsightedly to read.)	490
KEEPER AND JESSE BEL. We're reading it.	
Well, now you've got it re What do you make of it?	ead,
JESSE BEL. The same old nothing.	
KEEPER. A beautiful impossibility.	
PAUL. Keeper, I'm glad you think it beautiful.	
KEEPER. An irresistible impossibility. A lofty beauty no one can live up to, Yet no one turn from trying to live up to.	495
Yet so we'll have to weep because we can't.  Mercy is only to the undeserving.  But such we all are made in the sight of God.	500
"Oh, what is a king here, And what is a boor? Here all starve together, All dwarfed and poor."	505
Here we all fail together, dwarfed and poor. Failure is failure, but success is failure. There is no better way of having it. An end you can't by any means achieve, And yet can't turn your back on or ignore, That is the mystery you must accept.— Do you accept it, Master Jonas Dove?	510
JONAH. What do you say to it, My Brother's Keeper?	

KEEPER. I say I'd rather Than found in church.	be lost in the woods	
JONAH. TI	hat doesn't help me much.	515
Lies in our different appro	e, mine more through Palestine Paul's offer. cy,	520
Yet no one turn away from	<u>-</u>	
I simply turn away from i	•	
PAUL.	You Pagan!	
KEEPER. Yes, call me Pag I won't deceive myself abo By making failure out of e Any equality they may exl In making fools of people	equal value. hibit's	525
PAUL. But you—what is	your answer, Jonas Dove?	
JONAH. You ask if I see And I reply I almost think Beyond this great door you Beyond the storm, beyond	i I do, I have locked against me,	530
PAUL. Yes, Pilgrim now Your fugitive escape-becom		535
Or you will come to with When a great tide of argu My small fresh-water sprir	ment sweeps in aggets drowned of course.	
But when the brine goes b	ack as go it must	E40

I can count on my source to spring again, Not even brackish from its salt experience. No true source can be poisoned.

You've finished. I'm dismissed. I want to run
Toward what you make me see beyond the world.
Unlock the door for me.

545

KEEPER.

Not that way out.

JONAH. I'm all turned round.

There is your way prepared.

JONAH. That's not my door.

KEEPER. No, that's another door.

Your exit door's become a cellar door.

(The door here opens darkly of itself.)

550

JONAH. You mean I'm being sent down in the cellar?

PAUL. You must make your descent like everyone.

KEEPER. Go if you're going.

JONAH. Who is sending me?
Whose cellar is it, yours or the apostle's? 554

My dungeoneers, come fetch us.—No one answers.

There's not much we can do till Martin gets here.—

Don't let me scare you. I was only teasing.

It is the cellar to my store, but not my cellar.

Jesse has given Paul the rent of it

560

To base his campaign on to save the world.

JESSE BEL. Something's the matter, everyone admits.

On the off-chance it may be lack of faith, I have contributed the empty cellar To Paul to see what he can do with it To bring faith back. I'm only languidly Inclined to hope for much. Still what we need Is something to believe in, don't we, Paul?	565
Something to be fanatical about, So as to justify the orthodox In saving heretics by slaying them, Not on the battlefield, but down in cellars. That way's been tried too many times for me. I'd like to see the world tried once without it.	570 575
JESSE BEL. The world seems crying out for a Messiah.	
KEEPER. Haven't you heard the news? We already have And of the Messianic race, Karl Marx.	e one,
JESSE BEL. Light, bring a light!	
KEEPER. Awh, there's no lack of light, you—	of
A light that falls diffused over my shoulder And is reflected from the printed page And bed of world-flowers so as not to blind me. If even the face of man's too bright a light To look at long directly (like the sun),	580
Then how much more the face of truth must be.  We were not given eyes or intellect  For all the light at once the source of light—  For wisdom that can have no counterwisdom.  In our subscription to the sentiment  Of one God, we provide the shall be one	585
Of one God, we provide He shall be one	590

Who can be many Gods to many men, His church on earth a Roman Pantheon; Which is our greatest hope of rest from war. Live and let live, believe and let believe. 'Twas said the lesser gods were only traits Of the one awful God. Just so the saints Are God's white light refracted into colors.

595

JESSE BEL. Let's change the subject, boys, I'm getting nervous.

KEEPER. Nervous is all the great things ever made you.

But to repeat and get it through your head:

We have all the belief that's good for us.

Too much all-fired belief and we'd be back

Down burning skeptics in the cellar furnace

Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

JONAH. What's all this talk of slaying down in cellars— 605 So sinister? You spoke to someone down there.

KEEPER. My friends and stokers, Jeffers and O'Neill.
They fail me. Now I'm teasing you again.
There's no one down there getting tortured, save
A penitent perhaps, self-thrown on Mercy.

610

JONAH. I heard a deep groan—maybe out of him. What's really down there?

Where you must lie in self-forgetfulness
On the wet flags before a crucifix
I have had painted on the cellar wall
By a religious Aztec Indian.

615

JONAH. Then it's not lethal—to get rid of me? Have they been down?

Their case is not so simple. You are good.	620
JONAH. I am your convert. Tell me what I think. My trouble has been with my sense of justice. And you say justice doesn't really matter.	
PAUL. Does it to you as greatly as it did?	
JONAH. I own the need of it had somewhat faded Even before I came in here tonight.	625
PAUL. Well then!	
JONAH. And that's what I'm to meditate?	
PAUL. Meditate nothing. Learn to contemplate. Contemplate glory. There will be a light. Contemplate Truth until it burns your eyes out.	630
JONAH. I don't see any staircase.	
KEEPER. There are stairs.	
PAUL. Some lingering objection holds you back.	
JONAH. If what you say is true, if winning ranks The same with God as losing, how explain Our making all this effort mortals make?	635
KEEPER. Good for you, Jonah. That's what I've been s	aying.
JONAH. You'll tell me sometime. All you say has greater Yet your friend here can't be quite disregarded.	ness.
Naïveness about Justice out of him, As once the Pharaoh did it out of Sekhti By having him whipped every day afresh	640

Not in the proper spirit.

These two are stubborn children, as you see.

PAUL.

For clamoring for justice at the gate, Until the scribes had taken down a bookful For distribution to his bureaucrats.

645

JONAH. I'm going now. But don't you push me off.

KEEPER. I was supporting you for fear you'd faint From disillusionment. You've had to take it.

(Jonah steps on the threshold as the door Slams in his face. The blow and the repulse Crumple him on the floor. Keeper and Paul Kneel by him. Bel stands up beside her chair As if to come, but Keeper waves her off.)

JONAH. I think I may have got God wrong entirely.

KEEPER. All of us get each other pretty wrong.

655

650

JESSE BEL. Now we have done it, Paul. What did he say?

JONAH. I should have warned you, though, my sense of justice

Was about all there ever was to me.

When that fades I fade—every time I fade.

Mercy on me for having thought I knew.

660

665

JESSE BEL. What did he say? I can't hear what he says.

PAUL. Mercy on him for having asked for justice.

You poor old sape, if I may coin the slang.
We like you, don't we, Paul? (Paul takes his wrist.)

JESSE BEL. (Still standing off) We've all grown fond of you.

PAUL. We've all grown fond of you. (Paul says it louder, But Jonah gives no sign of having heard.)

KEEPER. Who said, "Too late, you cannot enter now"? He was rejected for his reservations! 670 KEEPER. (Still on his knees, he sits back on his heels.) But one thing more before the curtain falls.— (The curtain starts to fall.) Please hold the curtain.— All Paul means, and I wish the dead could hear me-All you mean, Paul, I think-Will you stand there TESSE BEL. And let that tell you what you think, like that? PAUL. Suffer a friend to try to word you better. JESSE BEL. Oh, there's to be a funeral oration. And we're an orator. Get up. Stand up For what you think your doctor thinks, why don't you? 680 Don't wear your pants out preaching on your knees. Save them to say your prayers on.—What's the matter? KEEPER. (He doesn't rise, but looks at her a moment.) Lady, at such a time, and in the Presence!— I won't presume to tell Bel where to go. 685 But if this prophet's mantle fell on me I should dare say she would be taken care of. We send our wicked enemies to Hell. Our wicked friends we send to Purgatory. But Bel gets some things right—and she was right— JESSE BEL. (She startles at the sudden note of kindness.)

JESSE BEL. (She startles at the sudden note of kindness.) I am right, then?

Courage is of the heart by derivation,
And great it is. But fear is of the soul.

And I'm afraid. (The bulb lights sicken down. The cellar door swings wide and slams again.)	695
PAUL. The fear that you're afraid with is the fear Of God's decision lastly on your deeds. That is the Fear of God whereof 'tis written.	
KEEPER. But not the fear of punishment for sin (I have to sin to prove it isn't that).  I'm no more governed by the fear of Hell  Than by the fear of the asylum, jail, or poorhouse,  The basic three the state is founded on.	700
But I'm too much afraid of God to claim I have been fighting on the angels' side. That is for Him and not for me to say.	705
For me to say it would be irreligious.  (Sometimes I think you are too sure you have been.)  And I can see that the uncertainty In which we act is a severity, A cruelty, amounting to injustice That nothing but God's mercy can assuage.	710
I can see that, if that is what you mean. Give me a hand up, if we are agreed.	715
PAUL. Yes, there you have it at the root of things. We have to stay afraid deep in our souls Our sacrifice—the best we have to offer, And not our worst nor second best, our best, Our very best, our lives laid down like Jonah's, Our lives laid down in war and peace—may not	720
Be found acceptable in Heaven's sight. And that they may be is the only prayer Worth praying. May my sacrifice Be found acceptable in Heaven's sight.	725
be found acceptable	

My failure is no different from Jonah's.

We both have lacked the courage in the heart

To overcome the fear within the soul
And go ahead to any accomplishment.

Courage is what it takes and takes the more of
Because the deeper fear is so eternal.

And if I say we lift him from the floor
And lay him where you ordered him to lie
Before the cross, it is from fellow-feeling,

As if I asked for one more chance myself

To learn to say (He moves to Jonah's feet.)

Nothing can make injustice just but mercy.

#### Curtain

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#### EDITOR'S STATEMENT

This edition follows basically the organization of Complete Poems of Robert Frost (1949), with the addition of In the Clearing (1962), which has been placed in sequence immediately before A Masque of Reason and A Masque of Mercy, thus allowing the two Masques to stand together at the end of the overall collection, as in Complete Poems.

The bibliographical and textual notes are arranged according to the order within this volume of the elements to which they relate. Entries for individual poems are prefixed by a citation giving, first, the page on which the poem appears or begins, then, its title; thereafter are included:1) reference to any initial authorized appearance (or "1st") which preceded publication of the poem in one of RF's books of new poetry, 2) reflection, by the year of any such publication, of the poem's inclusion by RF within his major selected and collected editions, 3) line-by-line specification of such textual variance as may exist among the printed sources referred to, 4) indication of changes introduced by the present editor that constitute departures from the copy-texts, and 5) provision of other information deemed to be of special pertinence.

The documentation herein of divergent readings is intended to reproduce published versions only, without attempting to trace, in a period that is still too early for doing so comprehensively, manuscript and typescript variants. (The texts the poet personally committed to publication are incident mainly to first appearances ("1st"s) of his poems in periodicals and elsewhere and to appearances within his own books of new verse and his volumes of selected and collected poetry. In the making of textual comparisons first printings or issues have

been consistently used.) Differences of a substantive character have been identified (as VARIANTS) within the notes, but variations resulting from obvious and inconsequential typographical errors, as well as those involving differing punctuation and alternate spelling, have generally not been cited.

Based on what is known of RF's attention to the proofs of his books in the latter years of his life, Complete Poems and In the Clearing have been chosen as possessing prime textual authority and are followed in The Poetry of Robert Frost. Departures have, however, been made from these copy-texts, both for the correction of errors and for achieving greater textual clarity. All editorial changes have been recorded (as EMENDA-TIONS) in the notes except those associated with standardizing the employment of double quote-marks for the setting off of quotations and single quotes for quotations within quotations. Although an effort has been made to normalize spelling, in order to attain a degree of uniformity for the volume as a whole and to conform to present-day usage, no attempt has been made to impose upon the text strict consistency in capitalization, since to do so would risk occasional conflict with the poet's intentions of emphasis or with other of his deliberate stylistic practices.

Abbreviations which have been adopted for the designation of RF's principal works are:

ABW — A Boy's Will (London: David Nutt, 1913)

NOB — North of Boston (London: David Nutt, 1914)

MI — Mountain Interval (New York: Henry Holt, 1916)

NH — New Hampshire (New York: Henry Holt, 1923)

WRB — West-Running Brook (New York: Henry Holt, 1928)

AFR — A Further Range (New York: Henry Holt, 1936)

AWT — A Witness Tree (New York: Henry Holt, 1942)

AMOR — A Masque of Reason (New York: Henry Holt, 1945)

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- Steeple Bush (New York: Henry Holt, 1947)
SB
AMOM— A Masque of Mercy (New York: Henry Holt, 1947)
       - In the Clearing (New York: Holt, Rinehart and
ITC
               Winston, 1962)
        - Selected Poems (New York: Henry Holt, 1923)
1923
        - Selected Poems (New York: Henry Holt, 1928)
1928
       — Collected Poems (New York: Henry Holt, 1930)
1930
       - Selected Poems (New York: Henry Holt, 1934)
1934
       - Selected Poems (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936)
1936
        — Collected Poems (New York: Henry Holt, 1939)
1939
       — The Poems (New York: Modern Library, 1946)
1946
       — Complete Poems (New York: Henry Holt, 1949)
1949
       — Aforesaid (New York: Henry Holt, 1954)
1954
       — Selected Poems (London: Penguin Books, 1955)
1955
       - Selected Poems (New York: Holt, Rinehart and
1963
               Winston, 1963)
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The following is a sample entry for one of the poems of this collection:

266 THE ARMFUL: 1st in The Nation, February 8, 1928; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 5 I should care] one would like 1st; EMENDATIONS 1 (as 1st) seize] seize, 3—],

Citing "The Armful" as on page two hundred and sixty-six, the entry indicates: that the poem first appeared in *The Nation* of February 8, 1928; that (besides its presence in *West-Running Brook*) it was included in the selected and collected editions identified by the years given; that within the several publications referred to one textual variant occurred—in line five what now reads "I should care" read "one would like" in the first appearance; and that the present editor has made two emendations—in the first line a comma

has been deleted, so that (as was the case in the first appearance) the reading is "seize" where the copy-text read "seize," and in line three a dash has been substituted for a comma which existed in the copy-text.

With further regard to the noting of editorial emendations, a notation such as —] or;] indicates that the punctuation given before the bracket has been inserted where the copy-text had no punctuation at all. If more than one identical change has been made within a line, but one notation is given; thus,] signifies that a comma or commas have been supplied. The use of -] always means that a hyphen has been provided editorially to join what in the copy-text were separate words, while in those instances where a hyphen has been entered within what was a single word in the copy-text both the new and old forms are given in full; accordingly, "far-distant" emended from "far distant" is noted simply as -] while "small-time" for "smalltime" is small-time] smalltime when represented in the notes.

E.C.L.

Dartmouth College August 1969

#### NOTES

1 THE PASTURE: originally included in NOB as the introductory poem of that book, "The Pasture" appears as such with respect to the total contents of the present volume, in extension of a provision made by RF for his collected editions, 1930 and 1939, and for his Complete Poems, 1949; it was also placed by RF as the initial poem in each of the editions of his Selected Poems and in his Poems, 1946; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 4 and 8 (as 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936) shan't] sha'n't

#### A BOY'S WILL

(London: David Nutt, 1913)

In its original form the table of contents for A Boy's Will specified a division of the book into three numbered sections and included, also, a gloss for each of the poems except two, "Going for Water" and "Reluctance":

#### PART I

INTO MY OWN The youth is persuaded that he will be rather more than less himself for having forsworn the world.

GHOST HOUSE He is happy in society of his choosing.

My November Guest He is in love with being misunderstood.

LOVE AND A QUESTION He is in doubt whether to admit real trouble to a place beside the hearth with love.

A LATE WALK He courts the autumnal mood.

Stars There is no oversight of human affairs.

STORM FEAR He is afraid of his own isolation.

WIND AND WINDOW FLOWER Out of the winter things he fashions a story of modern love.

TO THE THAWING WIND He calls on change through the violence of the elements.

A PRAYER IN SPRING He discovers that the greatness of love lies not in forward-looking thoughts;

Flower Gathering nor yet in any spur it may be to ambition.

Rose Pogonias He is no dissenter from the ritualism of nature; Asking for Roses nor from the ritualism of youth which is makebelieve.

WAITING—AFIELD AT DUSK He arrives at the turn of the year.

In a Vale Out of old longings he fashions a story.

A Dream Pang He is shown by a dream how really well it is with him.

In Neglect He is scornful of folk his scorn cannot reach.

THE VANTAGE POINT And again scornful, but there is no one hurt.

Mowing He takes up life simply with the small tasks.

GOING FOR WATER

#### PART II

REVELATION He resolves to become intelligible, at least to himself, since there is no help else;

THE TRIAL BY EXISTENCE and to know definitely what he thinks about the soul;

IN EQUAL SACRIFICE about love;

THE TUFT OF FLOWERS about fellowship;

Spoils of the Dead about death;

PAN WITH Us about art (his own);

THE DEMIURGE'S LAUGH about science.

#### PART III

Now Close the Windows It is time to make an end of speaking. A Line-Storm Song It is the autumnal mood with a difference. October He sees days slipping from him that were the best for

what they were.

My Butterfly There are things that can never be the same.

#### RELUCTANCE

When RF's Collected Poems was published in 1930 three poems ("Asking for Roses," "In Equal Sacrifice," and "Spoils of the Dead") were omitted from the representation of A Boy's Will therein, while one poem ("In Hardwood Groves") was added. The 1934 edition of A Boy's Will included "Asking for Roses" but not "In Equal Sacrifice," "Spoils of the Dead," or "In Hardwood Groves." Collected Poems of 1939 and Complete Poems in 1949 both followed the contents that had

been established for A Boy's Will by the 1930 collected edition, as does the present volume.

A Boy's Will was dedicated: то Е. М. F.

- 5 Into My Own: 1st as "Into Mine Own" in New England Magazine, May 1909; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 withheld] deterred, 1st 8 wheel pours] wheels pour 1st 11 who should] those who 1st 12 held] hold 1st
- 5 GHOST HOUSE: 1st in The Youth's Companion, March 15, 1906; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 12 that] the 1st 29 how] so 1st; EMENDATIONS 4 falls falls, 26—], 27—],—
- 6 MY NOVEMBER GUEST: 1st in The Forum, November 1912; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 4 the bare, the] both bare and 1st 8 are] have 1st 10 silver] silvered 1st 11 desolate, deserted trees] fallen, bird-forsaken breeze 1st
- 7 Love and a Question: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; variant 1 Stranger] stranger ABW; emendation 10 With,] With
- 8 A LATE WALK: in 1930, 1939, 1949, 1963; EMENDATION 13,]
- 9 STARS: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949; EMENDATION 8 —],—
- 9 STORM FEAR: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 3-] 12—],—
- 10 WIND AND WINDOW FLOWER: in 1930, 1939, 1949; EMENDATIONS 2 (as ABW, 1930, 1939),]. 9 (as ABW, 1930, 1939),] 11 by] by,
- 11 To the Thawing Wind: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; variants 4 steam] stream 1946 8 ice will] ices ABW
- 12 A Prayer in Spring: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 12-]
- 12 Flower-Gathering: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949; emendation 2 glow] glow,

- 13 Rose Pogonias: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 7—],— 15 color] color, 22 hours] hours,
- 14 WAITING: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANT
  2 among] along 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 2 (as ABW, 1930, 1939, 1946) among] along 26 absent,] absent
- 15 In a Vale: in 1930, 1939, 1949
- 16 A Dream Pang: in 1930, 1939, 1949; emendation 9 all,] all
- 16 In Neglect: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 17 THE VANTAGE POINT: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS Title The] A 1923, 1928, 1934 8 are] are most 1923, 1928, 1934; EMENDATION 11 sunburned] sun-burned
- 17 Mowing: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 18 Going for Water: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949
- 19 REVELATION: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 4 really find us] find us really ABW, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946 finds us really 1936 5 Tis] A 1923
- 19 THE TRIAL BY EXISTENCE: 1st in The Independent,
  October 11, 1906; in 1930, 1939, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS
  50 strife] life 1st 61 taken] ta'en 1st; EMENDATIONS 12 (as 1st)
  pasturewise] pasture-wise 14—];— 17 (as 1st) cliff top] cliff-top
  32 His] his
- 22 The Tuft of Flowers: Ist in The Derry Enterprise
  (Derry, New Hampshire), March 9, 1906; in 1923, 1928, 1930,
  1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS
  7 had gone his way] was vanished, too Ist 8 be] work Ist been]
  worked Ist 9 be] work Ist 11 swift] close Ist 12 bewildered]
  'wildered Ist, ABW 17 eye] one Ist 21 eye] eyes Ist
  (Ist, ABW, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946 have following
  24 a couplet: I left my place to know them by their name, / Finding
  them butterfly weed when I came.) 31 wakening birds around]
  birds' awakening sound Ist 34 worked] was Ist 37 dreaming,

- as it were] it seemed to me 1st 38 thought] life 1st; EMENDATION 8 (as 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936) —],—
- 23 Pan with Us: in 1930, 1939, 1949; EMENDATIONS
  1 —],— 3 —],— 12,] 28 sunburned] sun-burned 29.] —
- 24 The Demiurge's Laugh: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 25 Now Close the Windows: in 1930, 1939, 1949
- 25 In Hardwood Groves: 1st as "The Same Leaves" in The Dearborn Independent, December 18, 1926; as noted above, not in ABW; in 1930, 1939, 1949; variants 9 must be] must first be 1st flowers and] flowers, then 1st; EMENDATION 2,]
- 26 A LINE-STORM SONG: 1st in New England Magazine,
  October 1907; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANT
  13 crushed] hushed 1st; EMENDATIONS 3 (as 1st) -] 4 hoofprints]
  hoof-prints 23,] 29 (as 1st),]
- 27 October: 1st in The Youth's Companion, October 3, 1912; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 28 My Butterfly: 1st, subtitled "An Elegy," in The Independent, November 8, 1894 (the poem having also been included in 1894 in RF's privately printed Twilight); in 1930, 1939, 1949; variants 8 scarce] not ABW 13 thy] the 1st, ABW 19 regret] two tears 1st land] fields 1st 22 Thou didst not know] And didst thou think 1st (wherein 24 ends with a question mark) 23 That fate had] Fate had not 1st 25 Nor yet did I.] "Twas happier to die 1st (1st has following 25 a line: And let the days blow by.) 26 And there were other] These were the unlearned 1st (1st has following 30, which therein ends with a comma, a line: Jealous of immortality.) 34 and the dreaming fond;] and 1st 42 thy] your 1st 43 broken] withered 1st 44 thou art] you are 1st; EMENDATIONS 5—] 27 His] his (as 1st),]: 28 He] he 29 Him] him
- 29 RELUCTANCE: 1st in The Youth's Companion, November 7, 1912; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 13 lie] are 1st 20 Was] Seemed 1st; EMENDATION 16 witch hazel] witch-hazel

#### NORTH OF BOSTON

(London: David Nutt, 1914)

Issuance at New York by Henry Holt and Company of a quantity of English sheets of *North of Boston* (the volume having a cancel title page dated 1914 and a binding distinct from the English ones) was followed during 1915 by publication of the firm's own editions of both *North of Boston* and *A Boy's Will*. Thus began an association between RF and Holt, as his principal publisher, which was to continue thereafter throughout the poet's lifetime.

North of Boston originally carried on the page after its table of contents the following statement: Mending Wall takes up the theme where A Tuft of Flowers in A Boy's Will laid it down.

Dedication: TO E. M. F. THIS BOOK OF PEOPLE

As noted elsewhere, "The Pasture," which was originally used as the introductory poem in North of Boston, appears as such for the overall contents of the present volume, this in continuance of a feature of RF's 1930 and 1939 collected editions and his Complete Poems (1949). In their original handling within North of Boston both "The Pasture" and the final poem, "Good Hours," were set in italic, rather than roman.

33 MENDING WALL: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 7 on a] on NOB; EMENDATIONS 2 it] it, 3,]; 38,]

34 THE DEATH OF THE HIRED MAN: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 105 saw it] saw NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 109 some] the NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 128 doesn't] didn't NOB, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946 136 he had] he'd had NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 144 anybody. Worthless though he is,] anyone. He won't be made ashamed NOB, 1923,

1928, 1934, 1936 145 He won't be made ashamed to please his brother] To please his brother, worthless though he is NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936; EMENDATIONS 1,] 3 tiptoe] tip-toe 28 pocket money—] pocket-money,— 35 barn door] barn-door 73-] 80,] 87 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934)——]— 107 harplike] harp-like 130,] 164 her—] her,

40 THE MOUNTAIN: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939,

1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 92 around] round 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 94 ever you can] you can ever NOB; EMENDATIONS 17 oxen,] oxen 60 —]. 103 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939).] 106 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934) ——] — 44 A HUNDRED COLLARS: 1st in Poetry and Drama, December 1913; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 7 And sees old friends he somehow can't get near] Never for more. Old friends—he can't get near them 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a comma) 10 as] while 1st 14 up] down 1st 21 lamps lights 1st 27 beds, of course, you understand beds you understand, of course 1st 40 went] vanished 1st 41 Layfayette] Lafayette 1st 45 don't] can't 1st (46 and 47 not in 1st) 48 I'll ask you later] I want to ask you 1st forget it] forget 1st 49 Lafe and Lafe, then 1st 50 Naked Unclad 1st 51 light] lamp-light 1st 58 blamed it on] thought it was 1st 63 fourteen | fifteen 1st | Fourteen | Fifteen 1st | 64 fourteen | fifteen 1st 65 come to think I must have back now I think of it, I have 1st 66 fourteen] fifteen 1st 67 them all. You ought to have] them. Some one ought to use 1st 68 They're yours and welcome; let me send them to you.—] I'll send them to you—hang me if I don't! 1st 74 a pillow] two pillows 1st 80 'My man' is it?] 'My man, my man.' 1st 84 fourteen | fifteen 1st 86 ninety | eighty 1st 88 carry] have 1st I can] You'll let me 1st 89 Where] Who 1st to for 1st Stay still.] For me? 1st 93 Will you believe me if I put it there] Shall I convince you, if I leave it there, 1st 95 so, Mister Man that, anyway 1st 96 ninety] eighty 1st 101 Now we are getting on together—talking.] We're getting on together. Now we're talking! 1st (1st has following 101 a line: I've been collecting for it all my life.) 103 find] find out 1st people] folks 1st 113 I says] says I 1st 122 You drive around? It must be pleasant work.] It must be pleasant, driving round the country. 1st 128 near] round 1st 130 Everything's shut sometimes] Everything may be shut 1st 133 get] seem 1st 135 maple trees] apple-trees 1st apple trees NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 (1st has 143 and 144 transposed in order and altered textually: Whether I have an errand there or not, / As if she had some sort of curviture.) 150 are] might be 1st (wherein "Oh, at the end of 150 is not present and the succeeding line begins with quotes) 157 No] Oh 1st

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158 Here's looking at you, then.—] Well, now I'm leaving you. 1st
(159 not in 1st) 160 I'm gone I am out 1st 167 really I—I]
really—I 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 175 scared people] a scared man
1st 176 in through 1st; EMENDATIONS (interlinear space entered
after 13 as in 1st) 20 (as 1st, NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934) ----]-
68 —] 79,] 91 (as 1st),] 154 —] 157 (as 1st, NOB, 1923,
1928, 1934) ____] - (comma after second no of 157 broken in
1949 and left out through error in 1963) 158, 170 (as 1st).
174 (as 1st), 176 — 177 —
51 Home Burial: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939,
1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 71 how to speak] how
NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936; EMENDATIONS 7?] 10 (as
1923, 1928, 1934, 1936)?], 13 help,] help 30 (as NOB,
1923, 1928, 1934) ____] - 31,] 32 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1930,
1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1955) banister] bannister 36—] 37—]
47,] 50 womenfolk] women-folk 66 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934)
___] - 91:]. 96 (as 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936)?]. 110 (as
1923, 1928, 1934, 1936)?]. 113 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934) ——]—
55 THE BLACK COTTAGE: in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946,
 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 26 the war] war NOB, 1928, 1934, 1936
 103 I] I 1928, 1934, 1936 120 loosely] closely 1928, 1934, 1936;
EMENDATIONS 13 windowsill] window-sill 19 (as 1928, 1934,
1936) West] west 22 haircloth] hair-cloth 27 (as 1928, 1934,
 1936) knelt,] knelt 36 went,] went 54,] 72,] 85
 When,] When 92,] 101,] 102 Good-night] Good-night,
 123 sandstorm] sand storm (interlinear space entered after 124 as in
 NOB, 1928, 1934, 1936) 125 (as NOB, 1928, 1934, 1936) "]
 59 BLUEBERRIES: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939,
 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 2 Patterson's Mortenson's
 NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 28 Patterson] Mortenson NOB,
 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 58 Not] No 1949, 1955, 1963 81
 Pattersons'] Mortensons' NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936;
 EMENDATIONS 24,] 29,] 58 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934,
 1936, 1939, 1946) Not] No 67 (as 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936) once,]
 once 97 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936) shan't] sha'n't
 62 A SERVANT TO SERVANTS: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 19<u>3</u>6,
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1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; EMENDATIONS 7,] 22 Straightaway]

Straight away 115 —],— 135,] 137 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939) —] 141,] 143 catchall] catch-all 155 window views] window-views 171 (as NOB) course] course, 176 (as NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936) shan't] sha'n't

68 AFTER APPLE-PICKING: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963

69 THE CODE: 1st as "The Code—Heroics" in Poetry, February 1914; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 2 cocks of hay haycocks up 1st 10 is was 1st, 1923 just now said] said just now 1st 13 more than] nearly 1st 18 would take time, of course,] had to take his time 1st 23 better or faster | faster or better 1st 35 big's | big as 1st 52 a | the 1st says | said 1st 53 well] right 1st 54 jag] take 1st catch NOB, 1928, 1934, 1936 60 those] these NOB, 1928, 1934, 1936 71 right] just 1st 81 mopping mopping the 1st 85 ye] you 1st 93 or] else 1st 98 Against the stove] Stuck in the oven 1st, NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 99 clean disgusted from behind] mad in back, and so disgusted 1st 103 my just] just my 1st 105 meet] face 1st 108 his] the 1st 111 don't know | can't say 1st say | tell 1st; EMENDATIONS 20 (as 1st) is 30 (as 1st), 31 (as 1st), 35 (as 1st, NOB, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1955).] 56.] 66 "Let her come"?] Let her come? 87 (as 1st),]

73 The Generations of Men: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS 33 hear] to hear NOB 128 used to use] used NOB; EMENDATIONS 8 byroad] by-road 20-] 22,] (interlinear space deleted after 35 as in NOB) 39-] (interlinear space entered after 44) 53,] 78 (as NOB) — ] — 80:], mine] mine, (] 81)] 88,] 93 The-Seven-Caves-that-We-Came-Out-of] The Seven Caves that We Came out of 97 (as NOB) — ] — 101 — ], 102,] 104 — ],— 106;], 107,] 111?—], 120 forever] for ever 122,] 123,] 150 (as NOB) — ] — 158 (as NOB) — ] — 159 (as NOB) — ] — 161,] 163 doorsill] door-sill 170 (as NOB) — ] — 186 ones,] ones 194 (as NOB) — ]—

81 THE HOUSEKEEPER: 1st in The Egoist, January 15, 1914; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949; VARIANTS 16 other. I know what:] other on the road. 1st 19 good] help 1st 23 I'm] I am 1st (1st has following 27, which therein ends with an ellipsis and no close quote,

two lines: I know she isn't holding out for terms, / Nothing like that. I gave that up this morning.") 36 I] I'd 1st 40 live] have lived 1st 43 don't just] just don't 1st 70 up his mind] his mind up 1st That's There's 1st 92 after all in a way 1st 106 look | see 1st (1st has following 112, which therein ends with a dash, a line: Better than what we have to keep them in.) 114 farm place 1st 115 One thing] That's what 1st 116 say] claim 1st 117 don't complain doesn't mind 1st 118 our the 1st 119 You never saw I guess you've seen 1st 122 in and 1st (135 not in 1st, wherein the preceding line ends with a period) 137 say say 1st 141 sell, they're worth as much to keep] someone else, they are to him 1st 142 all expense, though] mostly outgo 1st 145 Here you] Here we 1st 150 been | been 1st 164 one. You needn't one that's blind. Don't 1st (1st has following 166, which therein has no close quote, a line: John's a good man to save, it seems to me.") 171 She's let] She lets 1st 177 worse than that] even worse 1st 185 what she's] what's she NOB who, but] who, NOB 197 him] John 1st (205 not in 1st, wherein a line of seven periods is in its place) 207 he] John 1st; EMENDATIONS 90 Why] "Why (as 1st) married?] married," 91 Why "Why (as 1st)?—]?" 107 besides,] besides 143 (as 1st) —], 162 (as NOB) ——] – 185 ——?] – 207 (as 1st)?], 208—] 209—]

- 89 The Fear: 1st in Poetry and Drama, December 1913; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; Variants 67 came from well along the road] seemed to come from far away 1st (80 not in 1st, NOB, wherein the preceding line ends with a close quote) 93 struck, it] struck it, 1st, NOB; EMENDATIONS 1-] 7.], 8—] 13 (as NOB) ] 31 (as 1st, NOB) ]— 35 (as NOB, 1930).] 41 (as 1st, NOB) ]— 47 (as 1st, NOB) shan't] sha'n't 63,] 74-] 81 (as 1st, NOB) ]— 85 (as 1st, NOB) ]—
- 92 The Self-Seeker: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1949; variants 56 I'm] And I'm NOB, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 160 what] that NOB, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939 196 folks's] folkses NOB, 1930, 1939 folkses' 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 227 try to] try 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936; emendations 3 or] or, 14 blessèd] blessed 17,] 27 wheel pit] wheel-pit 31 wheel pit] wheel-pit 35 kite string] kite-string 38,] 48—] 55,] 70;],

102 Good Hours: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949

### MOUNTAIN INTERVAL

EMENDATION 32.1

(New York: Henry Holt, 1916)

In its original form the table of contents for Mountain Interval emphasized six titles by including them in full capitals, rather than in small capitals as the others appeared. The six were "Christmas Trees," "In the Home Stretch," "Birches," "The Hill Wife" (followed by the names, in small capitals, of the five individual poems that make up "The Hill Wife" group), "The Bonfire," and "Snow." As in the case of North of Boston before it, Mountain Interval had its opening poem, "The Road Not Taken," and its concluding one, "The Sound of the Trees," in italic, instead of roman, type.

When the 1930 Collected Poems was published "The Exposed Nest" was moved from its original location within the book (between "A Girl's Garden" and "Out, Out—'") to a position immediately after "An Old Man's Winter Night," and two poems ("Locked Out" and "The Last Word of a Bluebird") were added. Both 1939's Collected Poems and Complete Poems of 1949 followed the 1930 arrangement for Mountain Interval, as does the present volume.

Mountain Interval was dedicated: TO YOU WHO LEAST NEED REMINDING that before this interval of the South Branch under black mountains, there was another interval, the Upper at Plymouth, where we walked in spring beyond the covered bridge; but that the first interval of all was the old farm, our brook interval, so called by the man we had it from in sale.

- 105 THE ROAD NOT TAKEN: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, August 1915; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 13 kept] marked 1st; EMENDATION 9,]
- 105 Christmas Trees: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 7, 8, 21, 23—], (interlinear space entered after 32) 49—], 53 (as MI, 1930, 1939, 1946)-] 56 (as MI, 1930, 1939),
- 108 An Old Man's Winter Night: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; variants 6 what it was] the need 1930, 1939, 1946 10 here] there MI, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946 26 keep] fill MI, 1930; EMENDATIONS 11—];— 18—], 19—], ,]
- 109 The Exposed Nest: as noted above, originally in a different location within the contents of MI; in 1930, 1939, 1949; EMENDATIONS 14 cutter bar] cutter-bar 24,]
- 110 A PATCH OF OLD SNOW: in 1930, 1939, 1949; EMENDATION 1,]
- 110 In the Home Stretch: 1st in The Century,
  July 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1949; variants
  46 besides] beside 1st, MI 56 went] gone 1st 60 much] much
  for me 1st, MI, 1923, 1928, 1934 82 tramping] trampling 1st
  107 bow] speech 1st 128 Its] It's MI, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934,
  1939, 1949 196 To] And 1st 202 The fire got out] Out got
  the fire 1st; emendations 32 mowing field] mowing-field 37—]
  49 (as 1st, MI, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939)—] 54—]
  78 (as 1st, MI, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939),]. (interlinear
  space entered after 94 as in 1st) (interlinear space entered after
  98 as in 1st, MI, 1928, 1934) (interlinear space entered after
  110 as in 1st, MI) 118 ten] Ten 128 (as 1st) Its] It's 157 (as
  MI, 1928, 1934)——]— 189,]
- 118 THE TELEPHONE: Ist in The Independent, October 9, 1916; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 15 What] What MI 17 Someone] Some one 1st; EMENDATION 8 windowsill] window sill

- 118 MEETING AND PASSING: in 1930, 1939, 1949; EMENDATION 14,]
- 119 HYLA BROOK: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955; EMENDATIONS 1 (as MI, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946).] 6 sleigh bells] sleigh-bells 7 jewelweed] jewel-weed 8,]
- 119 THE OVEN BIRD: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 6,]
- 120 BOND AND FREE: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963
- 121 BIRCHES: Ist in The Atlantic Monthly, August 1915; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 As ice storms do] Ice-storms do that 1st, MI, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946 (wherein all of which appearances the preceding line ends with a period) (1st and MI have following 22 a line in parentheses: Now am I free to be poetical?); EMENDATIONS 5 ice storms] ice-storms 11 snow crust] snow-crust 22 matter of fact] matter-of-fact ice storm] ice-storm (as 1st, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936),]
- 123 PEA BRUSH: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949; EMENDATION 2,]
- 123 PUTTING IN THE SEED: 1st in Poetry and Drama,
  December 1914; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949,
  1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 Soft] The 1st 10 through] from 1st
  12 soil] ground 1st; EMENDATION 6 (as 1st)),;
- 124 A TIME TO TALK: 1st in The Prospect (Plymouth Normal School, Plymouth, New Hampshire), June 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 124 THE COW IN APPLE TIME: 1st in Poetry and Drama, December 1914; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANT 8 spiked] pierced 1st
- 125 An Encounter: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, November 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS 7 ever] had 1st 22 I'm] I'm 1st; EMENDATION 6 (as 1st) overheated] over-heated

- 126 RANGE-FINDING: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 2 groundbird's ground bird's 6,]
- 126 THE HILL WIFE: collective title for five poems which first appeared as a group in The Yale Review, April 1916 ("The Smile" having previously been published, as noted below, in Poetry and Drama, December 1914); EMENDATIONS roman numerals have been prefixed to the titles of the individual poems, as in the case of the other poem groups in the present volume—
- 126 I. LONELINESS: 1st in The Yale Review, April 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 127 II. HOUSE FEAR: 1st in The Yale Review, April 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 3,] 6,] 8 indoor] in-door 9 house door] house-door
- 127 III. THE SMILE: 1st, without subtitle, in Poetry and Drama, December 1914; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963
- 128 IV. THE OFT-REPEATED DREAM: 1st in The Yale Review, April 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; variants 5 The] His 1st 9 It] He 1st 12 the tree might] he thought to 1st; EMENDATION 3 (as 1st) window latch] window-latch
- 128 V. THE IMPULSE: 1st in The Yale Review, April 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963
- 129 The Bonfire: 1st in The Seven Arts, November 1916; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; variants 12 against] upon 1st (1st has text of 18 and 19, without the final word of the latter, in three lines: And scare ourselves. Let wild fire loose / We will ..." / "And scare you too?" the children said.) 34 with] to 1st 39 around] round 1st, MI 45 the flame] that flame 1st, MI 49 almost] 1st, MI 76 Died not without] Rose till it made 1st 77 and] or 1st 94 wouldn't shouldn't 1st; EMENDATIONS 18 ——]... 21,] 37 (as 1st, MI, 1930, end of line damaged in 1939);] 40-] 41 (] 42,] 43)] 52 Bloodroot] Blood-root 107—],— 113 uphill] up hill
- 133 A GIRL'S GARDEN: in 1930, 1939, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 14 ideal] ideal MI; EMENDATIONS 31 (as MI, 1930, 1939) corn,] corn 34-] 45....]—

- 135 LOCKED OUT: Ist in The Forge, February 1917; as noted above, not in MI; in 1930, 1939, 1949; VARIANT 10 may have been to blame] always blamed myself 1st
- 135 THE LAST WORD OF A BLUEBIRD: as noted above, not in MI; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955
- 136 "Out, Out—": 1st in McClure's, July 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; variants 14 the word] that word 1st, MI 15 knew what supper meant] could be hungry too 1st; EMENDATION 20,]
- 137 Brown's Descent: in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949; variants (69 through 72 not in 1923, wherein the preceding line ends with a period); emendations Subtitle previously given over poem: or, The Willy-Nilly Slide 8-] 39 (as 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936)).].) 46 road] road, 50 motorcars] motor-cars
- 140 THE GUM-GATHERER: 1st in The Independent, October 9, 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 3 And And he 1st; EMENDATIONS 2 downhill down-hill 34,]
- 141 THE LINE-GANG: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 7 (as MI, 1930, 1939, 1946).] 12,]
- 142 The Vanishing Red: 1st in The Craftsman, July 1916; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; variants (1st has in place of 18 two lines: From a person who the less he attracted / Attention to himself you would have thought the better.); Emendations 6—],— (interlinear space entered after 8 as in MI) 15,] 16 (as 1st) thumping,] thumping millstone,] millstone (interlinear space entered after 18 as in MI) 19 (as 1st, MI, 1930, 1939, 1946) wheel pit] wheel-pit 27 meal sack] meal-sack 28 meal sack] meal-sack 29 (as 1st, MI, 1930, 1939, 1946) wheel pit] wheel-pit
- 143 Snow: Ist in Poetry, November 1916; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANTS (in the first printing of MI 204 was omitted and 205 was present twice) 288 Gone] Come MI (in 1st and MI 319 is given in quotes as a line of dialogue by Helen, rather than Fred, and quotation marks are

entered appropriately in 318-320 and an interlinear space is present before and after 319) (in 1923, 1928, 1934, and 1936 there is a break in the dialogue between 319 and 320 with appropriate close and open quotes to represent a change of speaker at that point) (in 1st a line break occurs in the latter part of 324 after the close quote); EMENDATIONS 3 (as 1st) Coles, Coles 4;], 5,] 7 pipestem] pipe-stem 22 uphill] up hill 29 (as 1st, MI, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936) then, then 36—] 38 (as 1st).], 42 (as 1923, 1928, 1934) \_\_\_\_\_] - \_\_\_] 51 (as 1st) \_\_\_] 55 look] Look (as 1st, MI, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946) twelve, twelve. 57 (as 1st):]. 64-] 78,] 108 Please?] please? 120 (as 1st):]; 123 (as 1st):]. (as 1st), 166 windowpane window-pane 179 windowsills window-sills 181 words—] words. 190 (as 1st) snow-line] snowline 210 Good-night] good-night 221 snowstorms] snowstorms 230, 233 (as 1st) why, why to, to 246 table, table 249 (as 1st) tongues] tongues, 267 (as 1st) —]. 294?—]? 296 —] 302,] 304,] —] 305 suppose?—she] suppose—? She 324 (as 1st), 329 and And 330 answer. answer. 334 him,] him 339 to To 342 (as MI, 1923, 1928, 1934) \_\_\_1\_

156 The Sound of Trees: 1st in Poetry and Drama,
December 1914; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949,
1955, 1963; VARIANT Title The Sound of Trees] The Sound of the
Trees MI, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; EMENDATION
Title (as 1st, 1923, 1963) The Sound of Trees] The Sound of
the Trees

# NEW HAMPSHIRE

(New York: Henry Holt, 1923)

New Hampshire was the first of RF's books to have both a trade and a limited edition or issue. Thereafter each successive volume of new poetry was accorded such dual provision, as were the collected edition of 1930 and 1949's Complete Poems. (Aforesaid in 1954 was published solely in a limited edition, while the other collected and selected editions had trade editions only.) The limited New Hampshire consisted of three hundred and fifty numbered copies, signed by the author.

# Dedication: To VERMONT AND MICHIGAN

The title page of *New Hampshire* carried a subtitle identifying the book as "A Poem with Notes and Grace Notes," and the volume was divided into three parts: the title poem itself, followed by the section called "Notes" (consisting of the poems "A Star in a Stoneboat" through "I Will Sing You One-O") and, finally, the section of "Grace Notes" (including the remaining thirty poems). As specified below, several elements of the title poem bore footnote references to poems of the "Notes" section, as did one line in "The Star-Splitter."

159 New Hampshire: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 40 turrets, turrets 47, 48, 62 showcase, show-case 64 President. (Pronounce) President (pronounce 66.)]). 74,] 77 (as NH) Indians] Indians, 141 (as NH) fool's] fools' 144 showcase] show-case (interlinear space entered after 144) 160 stem end] stem-end blossom end] blossom-end 173 businesslike] business-like businessmen] business men 177 Yokefellows | Yoke-fellows sap yoke | sap-yoke | 192 crossroads | cross-roads 200 laugh] laugh, 205 fear—] fear,— 207 exclaim] exclaim, 244 (as NH, 1930, 1939, 1946) Ireland] Ireland, 254 handbag hand-bag 279 regime régime 293 hound dogs hound-dogs 294,] 304 lifelong] life-long 306 otherworldliness] other-worldliness 318,] 337 overfertile] over-fertile 345 logjam] log-jam 349 skipping] skipping, 371 "'Nature' Nature blood';] blood; 380 overstepped] over-stepped 381 —]; 383 foiled] foiled, 385 throne"—] throne.' 391 (as NH, 1930, 1939).] 400 And] And, 409, 410, (As noted above, in NH several elements of this title poem bore footnote references to poems of the "Notes" section of the book. These references are as follows: from sell in 7 Cf. page 37, "The Axe-helve."; from the end of 108 Cf. line 5, page 21, "A Star in a Stone-boat." (the line cited being the poem's fifth line); from style. in 125 Cf. page 56, "The Witch of Coos."; from quality in 148 Cf. line 31, page 25, "The Census-Taker;" line 26, page 27, "The Star-splitter;" and line 21, page 21, "A Star in a Stone-boat." (the lines cited being the fifty-seventh, twenty-sixth, and twenty-first lines of the respective poems); from the end of 164 Cf. page 49, "Wild Grapes."; from the end of 171 Cf. page 67, "A Fountain, a Bottle, a Donkey's Ears and Some Books."; from Marches. in

178 Cf. page 31, "Maple."; from Election in 195 Cf. page 61, "The Pauper Witch of Grafton."; from the end of 209 Cf. page 24, "The Census-taker."; from the end of 238 Cf. page 41, "The Grindstone."; from the end of 259 Cf. page 37, "The Axe-helve."; from the end of 266 Cf. page 27, "The Star-splitter."; from the end of 293 Cf. page 64, "The Pauper Witch of Grafton."; from the end of 299 Cf. line 27, page 50, "Wild Grapes." (the line cited being the poem's fifty-third line); from the end of 303 Cf. page 27, "The Star-splitter."; from the end of 345 Cf. page 44, "Paul's Wife."; from the end of 364 Cf. page 65, "An Empty Threat."; and from the end of 379 Cf. page 67, "A Fountain, a Bottle, a Donkey's Ears and Some Books.")

172 A STAR IN A STONEBOAT: 1st, without dedication, in The Yale Review, January 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 11 besides] beside 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS Title Stoneboat] Stone-boat 4 stone-cold] stone cold 5 gold] gold, 11 (as 1st, NH, 1930, 1939, 1946) besides] beside 14 ant eggs] ant-eggs 16 tail] tail, 19 (as 1st) —], 20 (as 1st):]; 26 stoneboat] stone-boat 40,] 48—], 53,]

174 THE CENSUS-TAKER: 1st in The New Republic, April 6, 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS 50 This] The 1st 58 is] be 1st; EMENDATIONS 12 (as 1st) much,] much 45 strawdust-covered] straw-dust covered 57,]

176 The Star-Splitter: 1st in The Century Magazine,
September 1923; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; variants
6 frozen] hard 1st 34 given] giving 1st 55 one for Christmas gift]
one's gift for Christmas 1st, NH, 1930, 1939, 1946 (95 through 99
not in 1963); emendations 15 farming] farming, 18 (as 1st)
lifelong] life-long (interlinear space entered after 21) 71 out,] out
75 stargazing] star-gazing 87 Star-Splitter] Star-splitter 89,]
92 (as 1st),] (As noted above, in NH this poem bore a footnote
reference to other poems of the "Notes" section of the book. This
reference is: from 86 Cf. page 21, "A Star in a Stone-boat;" and page
73, "I Will Sing You One-O.")

179 MAPLE: 1st in The Yale Review, October 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1949; VARIANTS (1st has following 29 (which therein ends

without punctuation) a line: In a child's mind, he suddenly perceived.) 36 he] he'd 1st 41 her name over] over her name 1st 44 her] the 1st Its strangeness lay] She saw its strangeness 1st 45 In having too much] Lay in its having 1st 52 Her] The 1st 60 still] yet 1930, 1939, 1949 67 But] She 1st the leaf back] back the leaf 1st 68 read] find 1st 99 side] end 1st 122 when he was] when 1st 126 on to a] to 1st 139 maples] maple 1st 163 meaning] a meaning 1st; EMENDATIONS 3 (as 1st), ] 7

M-A-P-L-E] M-A-P-L-E 23 (as 1st) How] How 60 (as 1st, NH—subsequently altered by RF to avoid, during the Prohibition era, the possible whimsical misreading of "still" in the sense of a distillery for the making of "home brew") still] yet 65, ] 76 (as 1st, NH, 1930, 1939).] 79 pad] pad, 80, ] 82 unshiplike] unship-like 116 (as 1st) life] life, 133 (as 1st) But] But, 138 sugarhouse] sugar house

185 THE AX-HELVE: Ist in The Atlantic Monthly, September 1917; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANT 44 with] 'mid Ist; EMENDATIONS 8 (as 1928, 1934, 1936) chopping block] chopping-block 24 (as 1st) -] 30 (as 1st, NH, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946),]. (interlinear space deleted after 54 as in 1st, 1928, 1934, 1936) 78 eyehole] eye-hole 97—],—101 (as 1st):];

188 THE GRINDSTONE: 1st in Farm and Fireside, June 1921; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 40 gait] gate 1st, NH 49 the] to 1st 62 I'd welcome] I welcomed 1st; EMENDATIONS 10 (as 1st);], 15 steel] steel, 27 (as 1st, NH, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946);], 31 willpower] will-power 41 hate] hate; 60 (as 1928, 1934, 1936) faster] faster, 66 (as 1st, NH, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946);].

191 Paul's Wife: 1st in The Century Magazine, November 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; Variants 14 is] is 1st 41 anything] any one 1st 69 broad] long 1st 137 not from] not 1st 157 speak] speak in 1st; EMENDATIONS 11—],—37 hero] hero, 44,] 55 there] there, 64-] 80 jackknife] jack-knife 81 (as 1st) dugout] dug-out 87 jackknife] jack-knife 96 (as 1st) And] And, 101 (as 1st),] 110 (as 1st) log,] log 114 (as 1st) (] 115 (as 1st).)] 117 waterlogged] water-logged

- 120 (as 1st), ] 131 millpond] mill-pond 153 (as 1st) her] her, 196 WILD GRAPES: 1st in Harper's Magazine, December 1920; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 17 as] of 1st; EMENDATIONS 21 (as 1st) headdress] head-dress 39 treetop] tree-top 43 (as 1st),] 45,] 52 (as 1st, NH, 1930, 1939, 1946) which] which, 63 (as 1st) fox grapes] fox-grapes 75.];
- 199 PLACE FOR A THIRD: 1st in Harper's Magazine, July 1920; in 1930, 1939, 1949; VARIANT 65 confused] confused up 1st; EMENDATIONS 23-] 27 (as 1st, NH, 1930, 1939):]; 40;], 56.], (interlinear space entered after 57 as in 1st)
- 202 Two WITCHES: collective title for two poems-
- 202 I. The Witch of Coös: 1st in Poetry, January 1922; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; Variants (throughout 1st mother.] The Mother son.] The Son) 5 could] could 1st 6 won't] won't 1st 8 I would have them know] you're to understand 1st 15 could that] that could 1st 53 a little] little 1st 124 have] like 1st 125 stay] stay 1st 141 was] was to NH, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963 146 kept up] kept NH, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; 155 Lajway] Barre 1st; Emendations 15 souls—] souls, 23,] 27 (as 1st, NH)?]! 40 cellar stairs] cellar-stairs 55 double doors] double-doors 81 button box] button-box 100 (as 1st),] 110 'The Wild Colonial Boy,'] The Wild Colonial Boy, 131 anymore] any more 141 (in accordance with a note by RF for an intended change and as 1st) was] was to 146 (as 1st) kept up] kept (A note in 1st and NH dates poem: Circa 1922)
- 207 II. THE PAUPER WITCH OF GRAFTON: 1st in The Nation, April 13, 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 18,] 28,] 55 trademark] trade mark 65,] 97 snowberries] snow berries
- 210 An Empty Threat: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 9 cross-legged] crosslegged 24 windbreak] wind-break 28—], 30 headshake] head shake 36 man,] man 48—] 49—], 56-]
- 212 A FOUNTAIN, A BOTTLE, A DONKEY'S EARS, AND SOME BOOKS: 1st in The Bookman, October 1923; in 1930, 1939, 1949;

- VARIANTS (13 not in 1st) 17 shut you up] silence you 1st (83 not in 1st) 89 uncomfortably uncomfortable 1st 95 heart of love] "heart of love" 1st 127 kindness] awe 1st; EMENDATIONS Title (as 1st) Ears, Ears 2 someday some day 5-] 14 Someday Some day \_\_\_\_]\_ 31 am am 64 Be ready, 'Be ready,' for for anything.] anything.' 80 windowsill] window sill 81 windowsill] window sill 93 (as 1st) packing case] packing-case, 96,] 111 wind] wind, 217 I WILL SING YOU ONE-O: 1st in The Yale Review, October 1923; in 1930, 1939, 1949, 1955; EMENDATIONS 26 (as 1st, NH, 1930, 1939).] 35 en masse] en masse 74,] 75,] 220 FRAGMENTARY BLUE: 1st in Harper's Magazine, July 1920; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963 220 FIRE AND ICE: 1st in Harper's Magazine, December 1920; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 7 say | know 1st 221 IN A DISUSED GRAVEYARD: 1st in The Measure, August 1923; in 1930, 1939, 1949, 1963; EMENDATION 4 anymore] any more 221 Dust of Snow: 1st as "A Favour" in The London Mercury, December 1920 (and immediately thereafter as "Snow Dust" in The Yale Review, January 1921); in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963 222 To E. T.: 1st in The Yale Review, April 1920; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; EMENDATIONS 1, 3, 4 see] see, you] you, 222 NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY: 1st in The Yale Review, October 1923; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963 223 THE RUNAWAY: 1st in The Amherst Monthly (Amherst College), June 1918; in 1923, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 at] to 1st he had to] we saw him 1st 8 against the curtain of falling across instead of behind the 9 "I think the] The 1st of the of the falling 1st 10 isn't winter-broken] never saw it before 1st 12 I doubt if even his mother could tell] He wouldn't believe when his mother told
  - 17 And all his tail that isn't hair] Dilated nostrils, and tail held

13 He'd think] He thought 1st 14 Where is his mother? He can't be out alone."] So this is something he has to bear alone 15 with] with a 1st, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936 16 And] He

1st

1st

- straight 1st 20 When] When all 1st
- 223 THE AIM WAS SONG: 1st in The Measure, March 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 224 STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING: 1st in The New Republic, March 7, 1923; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 5 My] The 1st; EMENDATIONS 2, 13 dark, dark
- 225 FOR ONCE, THEN, SOMETHING: 1st in Harper's Magazine, July 1920; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 5,]
- 225 BLUE-BUTTERFLY DAY: 1st in The New Republic, March 16, 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963
- 226 THE ONSET: 1st in The Yale Review, January 1921; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 18 downhill] down hill
- 226 To Earthward: 1st in The Yale Review, October 1923; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 5 (as 1st, NH, 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946), 8 Downhill Down hill 17,]
- 228 GOOD-BY AND KEEP COLD: 1st in Harper's Magazine, July 1920; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 2 the cold] cold 1st, NH, 1928, 1934, 1936 22 nurtured] nourished NH, 1928, 1934, 1936
- 229 Two Look at Two: in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; emendations 21,] 28,]
- 230 NOT TO KEEP: 1st in The Yale Review, January 1917; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949; variants 4 there] in her sight 1st, NH, 1930, 1939, 1946 8 to look and ask] to ask 1st, NH, 1930, 1939, 1946 9 is] was 1st; EMENDATIONS 2....]... 6.—]—
- 231 A Brook in the City: 1st in The New Republic, March 9, 1921; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949; variant 23 The]
  These 1st; EMENDATIONS 11 hearthstone hearth-stone 18,] 22,]
- 232 THE KITCHEN CHIMNEY: 1st in The Measure, August 1923; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; variant 19 would serve] served

- 1st; EMENDATION 6 apiece] a-piece
- 232 Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 5,]
- 233 A BOUNDLESS MOMENT: 1st in The New Republic, October 24, 1923; in 1930, 1939, 1949; VARIANT 11 moved] walked 1st; EMENDATIONS 5 (as 1st) Paradise-in-Bloom] Paradise-in-bloom 9 so,] so
- 234 EVENING IN A SUGAR ORCHARD: 1st in Whimsies (University of Michigan), November 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1949; VARIANTS 1 lull in lull of 1st 3 with a careful in a quiet 1st 13 a one 1st; EMENDATION 2 sugarhouse sugar-house
- 234 Gathering Leaves: 1st in The Measure, August 1923; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATION 17 (as 1st, NH, 1930, 1939, 1946);],
- 235 THE VALLEY'S SINGING DAY: 1st in Harper's Magazine, December 1920; in 1930, 1939, 1949; EMENDATIONS 5 songbird] song-bird 10 overnight] over-night
- 236 MISGIVING: 1st in The Yale Review, January 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 6 had] have 1st 9 his] the 1st 16 me] me 1st; EMENDATIONS 13 (as 1st), 14 (as 1st),
- 237 A HILLSIDE THAW: 1st in The New Republic, April 6, 1921; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1939, 1949; VARIANTS 23 six] eight 1st 26 nine] ten 1st; EMENDATIONS 13—],— 16—],
- 238 PLOWMEN: Ist in A Miscellany of American Poetry 1920 (New York, 1920); in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949; VARIANTS 1 A plow, they say,] I hear men say Ist 2 no] though 1st, NH, 1930, 1939, 1946
- 238 On a Tree Fallen Across the Road: 1st, without subtitle, in Farm and Fireside, October 1921; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; variants 12 earth by the] by either 1st 13 And, tired of aimless] This aimless earth now 1st 14 Steer straight off after something into] And steer it a direction straight through 1st
- 239 Our Singing Strength: 1st in The New Republic, May 2, 1923; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; variants 9 ground]

round 1st 48 left] let 1st; EMENDATIONS 35 (as 1st) underfoot] under foot 41,] 52 nonetheless] none the less 53 (as 1st) wild flowers] wildflowers

240 THE LOCKLESS DOOR: 1st in A Miscellany of American Poetry 1920 (New York, 1920); in 1930, 1939, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 15 whatever] whoever 1st; EMENDATIONS 6 (as 1st) tiptoed] tip-toed 9 (as 1st, NH, 1930, 1939).]

241 THE NEED OF BEING VERSED IN COUNTRY THINGS: 1st in Harper's Magazine, December 1920; in 1928, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963

## WEST-RUNNING BROOK

(New York: Henry Holt, 1928)

West-Running Brook was originally divided into six sections: I. Spring Pools (being the first eleven poems), II. Fiat Nox ("Once by the Pacific" through "Acquainted with the Night"), III. West-Running Brook (the title poem itself), IV. Sand Dunes (from the poem of that name through "The Flower Boat"), V. Over Back ("The Times Table" through "The Birthplace"), and VI. My Native Simile (the final seven poems).

When 1930's Collected Poems appeared three poems not previously part of the contents of West-Running Brook were introduced therein ("The Lovely Shall Be Choosers," "What Fifty Said," and "The Egg and the Machine"). The collected edition of 1939 and Complete Poems (1949) both retained the 1930 additions to West-Running Brook, as does the present volme.

The limited edition of the book consisted of one thousand numbered copies, signed by RF.

Dedicated: To E. M. F.

245 Spring Pools: 1st in The Dearborn Independent, April 23, 1927; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 9 Let them] May well 1st (wherein the preceding line ends without punctuation)

245 THE FREEDOM OF THE MOON: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949; EMENDATION 8 later] later,

- 246 THE ROSE FAMILY: 1st in The Yale Review and The London Mercury, July 1927; in 1930, 1939, 1949; VARIANT 6 plum] peach The Yale Review
- 246 FIREFLIES IN THE GARDEN: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 2 flies] flies, 3,] size] size, 4),]) 5 starlike] star-like
- 246 ATMOSPHERE: Ist as "Inscription for a Garden Wall" in Ladies' Home Journal, October 1928; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949
- 247 DEVOTION: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963
- 247 On Going Unnoticed: 1st as "Unnoticed" in The Saturday Review of Literature, March 28, 1925; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 2 on so 1st 6 is seems 1st; EMENDATIONS 3, 5 coralroot, coral-root (as 1st) know, know 15 coralroot coral-root (A note in WRB dates poem: 1901)
- 247 THE COCOON: 1st in The New Republic, February 9, 1927; in 1930, 1939, 1949; variants 12 want] long 1st 15 gale] wind 1st; EMENDATIONS 1,] 2 ways] ways, 3 new] new, 5,] 11 womenfolk] women-folk 15 (as 1st) —],—
- 248 A Passing Glimpse: 1st as "The Passing Glimpse" in The New Republic, April 21,1926; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 flowers] kinds 1st 7 Not] Nor 1st 8 Not] Nor 1st 12 Not in] In no WRB
- 249 A PECK OF GOLD: 1st as "The Common Fate" in The Yale Review, July 1927; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 2 sea fog] sea-fog (A note in WRB dates poem: As of about 1880)
- 249 ACCEPTANCE: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS 6 her] its WRB 8 his] its WRB
- 250 ONCE BY THE PACIFIC: 1st in The New Republic, December 29, 1926; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 8 shore] sand 1st (A note in WRB dates poem: As of about 1880)
- 250 Lodged: 1st in The New Republic, February 6, 1924; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 3 smote] struck 1st 250 A MINOR BIRD: 1st as "The Minor Bird" in The Inlander

- (University of Michigan), January 1926; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 must] may 1st 7 of course] I own 1st 8 wanting to silence any] ever wanting to silence 1st
- 251 BEREFT: 1st in The New Republic, February 9, 1927; in 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 6 past] passed 1st 7 in] on 1st 11 sinister in the ] in the sinister 1st; EMENDATIONS 5 downhill] down hill 8 (as 1st) floor] floor, (A note in WRB dates poem: As of about 1893)
- 251 TREE AT MY WINDOW: 1st in The Yale Review, July 1927; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 252 THE PEACEFUL SHEPHERD: 1st in The New York Herald Tribune Books, March 22, 1925; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 6 fear] think 1st; EMENDATION 2 (as 1st) bars] bars,
- 252 THE THATCH: in 1930, 1939, 1949; EMENDATIONS
  17 eaves] eaves, 35 onto] on to (A note in WRB dates poem:
  As of 1914)
- 254 A WINTER EDEN: 1st in The New Republic, January 12, 1927; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 1 garden] Eden 1st 13 So near to paradise all pairing Pairing in all known paradises 1st; EMENDATION 11-]
- 254 THE FLOOD: 1st as "Blood" in The Nation, February 8, 1928; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 10 implements of] tools of trade and 1st 11 but the] merely 1st; EMENDATION 13,]
- 255 Acquainted with the Night: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, October 1928; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; variant 7 stopped] hushed 1st; EMENDATION 11 (as 1st) height] height,
- 255 The Lovely Shall Be Choosers: Ist in separate form (New York, 1929), being a booklet in "The Poetry Quartos" series published by Random House; as noted above, not in WRB; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 6 would] would Ist 24 they] they 1st 35 dare] dares 1st 49 linger for her] stay and hear a 1st; EMENDATIONS 15 earrings] ear-rings (as 1st) pearls,] pearls 17-] 24 well,] well 35,]

- 257 WEST-RUNNING BROOK: in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 2 West-Running] West-running 3 West-Running] West-running 26 -] 30 you,] you 35—],— 47;], 49 abyss's] abyss' 74 West-Running] West-running
- 260 SAND DUNES: 1st in The New Republic, December 15, 1926; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 2 (as 1st) die] die, 6 town] town, 11 (as 1st) shape] shape,
- 261 CANIS MAJOR: 1st as "On a Star-bright Night" in The New York Herald Tribune Books, March 22, 1925; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 12 romps] roams WRB; EMENDATION 1 (as 1st, WRB, 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946),].
- 261 A SOLDIER: 1st as "The Soldier" in McCall's Magazine, May 1927; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 262 IMMIGRANTS: 1st as fourth stanza of "The Return of the Pilgrims" in George P. Baker's The Pilgrim Spirit (Boston, 1921); in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 1 of at 1st 2 Have Has WRB people races 1st 3 Mayflower Mayflower 1st, WRB, 1930, 1939, 1946 4 her] their 1st, WRB in to to the 1st; EMENDATIONS 3 (as 1st),
- 262 HANNIBAL: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 262 The Flower Boat: 1st in The Youth's Companion, May 20, 1909; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949; variants 6 of ] with 1st growing] a-growing 1st 9 judge] know 1st 10 That all they ask is rougher] She will brave but once more the Atlantic 1st 11 And] When 1st master will] fisherman 1st; EMENDATIONS 5 (as 1st), ] 8 (as 1st) Georges Bank] George's bank (A note in WRB records poem as: Very early)
- 263 THE TIMES TABLE: 1st in The New Republic, February 9, 1927; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS 2 with] and 1st 14 just] not 1st a thing] thing 1st 15 Nor] Or 1st nor nobody] or anyone 1st; EMENDATIONS 5 water bar] water-bar 15 I] I,
- 263 THE INVESTMENT: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963

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- 264 THE LAST MOWING: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 1 Faraway 16 O] oh
- 264 THE BIRTHPLACE: 1st in The Dartmouth Bema (Dartmouth College), June 1923; in 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 3 built, enclosed] built beside 1st 4 wall] rock 1st 5 Subdued] Reduced 1st 6 our] out 1st
- 265 The Door in the Dark: in 1930, 1939, 1949; emendations 1 dark] dark, 8 anymore] any more
- 265 DUST IN THE EYES: issued in broadside form as an advertisement for WRB; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963
- 266 SITTING BY A BUSH IN BROAD SUNLIGHT: in 1930, 1934, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 13 He] he
- 266 THE ARMFUL: 1st in The Nation, February 8, 1928; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 5 I should care] one would like 1st; EMENDATIONS 1 (as 1st) seize] seize, 3—],
- 267 What FIFTY SAID: as noted above, not in WRB; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963
- 267 RIDERS: in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 268 On Looking Up by Chance at the Constellations: in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 268 THE BEAR: 1st in The Nation, April 18, 1928; in 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 1 around] round 1st; EMENDATIONS 3 chokecherries] choke cherries 7 (as 1st) barbed wire] barbed-wire 13,] 17 toenail] toe-nail 24 (as 1st) -] 27 (as 1st) shut] shut, 31 (as 1st),]
- 269 THE EGG AND THE MACHINE: as noted above, not in WRB; Ist as "The Walker" in The Second American Caravan (New York, 1928), edited by Alfred Kreymborg, Lewis Mumford, and Paul Rosenfeld; in 1930, 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANTS 9 now, he had himself to thank] now to throw it down the bank 1st 20 turtle's turtle 1st 30 in its goggle glass on its polished brass 1st; EMENDATIONS 2 (as 1st), 7, 13 (as 1st), 14 (as 1st), 25 (as 1st) leather, leather 27 anymore] any more

#### A FURTHER RANGE

(New York: Henry Holt, 1936)

A Further Range was divided into six sections: Taken Doubly (the first fourteen poems, each having in the book's "Preface of Contents" an alternative title), Taken Singly ("Lost in Heaven" through "Provide, Provide"), Ten Mills (originally eleven in number, as noted below), The Outlands ("The Vindictives" through "Iris by Night"), Build Soil (both the poem of that title and "To a Thinker"), and Afterthought (the single poem "A Missive Missile").

Dedication: To E. F. for what it may mean to her that beyond the White Mountains were the Green; beyond both were the Rockies, the Sierras, and, in thought, the Andes and the Himalayas—range beyond range even into the realm of government and religion

The limited edition of A Further Range was of eight hundred and three numbered copies, signed by the author.

273 A LONE STRIKER: 1st as The Lone Striker in booklet form, being Number Eight of "The Borzoi Chap Books" (New York: Knopf, 1933); in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 11 manymany-eyed] many, many eyed (interlinear space deleted after 26 as in 1st) 29 harplike] harp-like 56,] (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, Without Prejudice to Industry)

275 Two Tramps in Mud Time: Ist in The Saturday Review of Literature, October 6, 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 9 oak] beech 1st, AFR, 1939, 1946 26 turns to] fronts 1st, AFR, 1939, 1946 66 living] life 1st; EMENDATIONS 14,] 26 (as 1st, AFR),] 34 witching wand] witching-wand 46 (as 1st, AFR),]. 55 ax] ax, (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, A Fulltime Interest)

277 THE WHITE-TAILED HORNET: 1st, with subtitle "or Doubts About an Instinct," in The Yale Review, Spring 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 19 stung] stings 1st 20 rolled] rolls 1st 21 would] will 1st my explanations] an explanation 1st 22 went] go 1st 23 at] to 1st

- 25 another] the other 1st 40 scent] smell 1st (1st has in place of 55 two lines: That robs someone of what we want to keep, / I mean our cherished fallibility.) 59 comparisons] comparison 1st 63 comparisons were] comparison was 1st; EMENDATION 20 heels] heels, (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, The Revision of Theories)
- 279 A BLUE RIBBON AT AMESBURY: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 honors] ribbons 1st 8 style] shape 1st 15 feeding at the] at the feeding 1st 23 past] of 1st 24 And] Past 1st 46 Yet] But 1st (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, Small Plans Gratefully Heard Of)
- 281 A DRUMLIN WOODCHUCK: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, June 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 10,] 18,] (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, Be Sure to Locate)
- 283 THE GOLD HESPERIDEE: 1st in Farm and Fireside,
  September 1921; in 1939, 1946, 1949; VARIANTS 8 And turned] To
  turn 1st 24 growing] blowing 1st 25 swung] shone 1st
  29 Would] Could 1st 59 which] that 1st; EMENDATIONS 24
  pipestem,] pipe-stem 39 (as 1st) Under] Under, 41 (as 1st, AFR,
  1939).] 43 (as 1st),] (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR,
  1939, and 1949: or, How to Take a Loss)
- 285 IN TIME OF CLOUDBURST: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 26 so endless a] the endless 1st 27 Not] Never 1st (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, The Long View)
- 286 A ROADSIDE STAND: Ist in The Atlantic Monthly, June 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949; VARIANT 31 ancient] old-fashioned Ist; EMENDATIONS 3 pled] plead 15,] )]), 21-] 25,] 26 anymore] any more (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, and 1949: or, On Being Put Out of Our Misery)
- 287 DEPARTMENTAL: 1st in The Yale Review, Winter 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; variants 23 to] for 1st

- 43 thoroughly] frightfully 1st; EMENDATIONS 21-] 35,] (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, The End of My Ant Jerry)
- 289 THE OLD BARN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE FOGS: in 1939, 1949; EMENDATIONS 6 that, that 12 widespread wide-spread 37 Prop-Locks Prop-locks 41 was, was (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, and 1949: or, Class Prejudice Afoot)
- 290 ON THE HEART'S BEGINNING TO CLOUD THE MIND: 1st in Scribner's Magazine, April 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 9 It] As it 1st 10 Godforsaken] world-forsaken 1st 14 knew] could tell 1st 21 but] but I 1st 31 And so] And 1st her] the lonely 1st; EMENDATIONS 10 Godforsaken] God-forsaken 16 (as 1st);]: 38 (as 1st, AFR, 1939),] 39 (as 1st) one,] one (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, From Sight to Insight)
- 292 The Figure in the Doorway: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANTS 1 riding] speeding 1st 4 oaks] oak 1st (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, and 1955 and also over poem in 1955: or, On Being Looked at in a Train)
- 293 AT WOODWARD'S GARDENS: 1st in Poetry, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 12 laced] linked 1st 22 flash of arm, a] flash, a monkey 1st 26 though] but 1st (1st has 33 on two lines, separated by interlinear space: To answer for themselves. / Who said it mattered—); EMENDATIONS 8 pinpoint] pin-point 9 (as 1st) other,] other 24 (as 1st) -] (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and also over poem in 1955: or, Resourcefulness Is More than Understanding)
- 294 A RECORD STRIDE: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, May 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 11 (as AFR, 1939, 1946), ] 21,] 34 overelated] over-elated (Subtitled in table of contents in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 and also over poem in 1955: or, The United States Stated)
- 295 Lost in Heaven: 1st in The Saturday Review of Literature, November 30, 1935; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS 11 O

- opening] I warned the 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a comma and close quote and the quote re-opens in the eleventh line in front of by), AFR, 1939, 1946 (these three being as 1st, except that their preceding line ends with an exclamation mark and close quote) Oh, opening 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 4 (as 1st) sky-marks] skymarks 11 O] Oh,
- 296 DESERT PLACES: 1st in The American Mercury, April 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 14 where no human race is void of human races 1st; EMENDATION 9 (as 1st),
- 296 LEAVES COMPARED WITH FLOWERS: 1st in The Saturday Review of Literature, February 2, 1935; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955
- 297 A LEAF-TREADER: 1st in The American Mercury, October 1935; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; variant 9 leaf to] leaves to 1st; EMENDATIONS Title (as 1st) -] 12 (as 1st),]
- 298 On Taking from the Top to Broaden the Base: in 1939, 1949; emendation 11,]
- 299 THEY WERE WELCOME TO THEIR BELIEF: 1st in Scribner's Magazine, August 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 4 overimportant] over-confident 1st; EMENDATION 11 (as 1st),
- 299 THE STRONG ARE SAYING NOTHING: 1st in The American Mercury, May 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 2 small] no 1st 8 another] one still 1st 13 farm to farm] man to man 1st 14 cry] message 1st
- 300 THE MASTER SPEED: 1st as "Master Speed" in The Yale Review, Winter 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963
- 300 Moon Compasses: 1st in The Yale Review, Autumn 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949; emendation 5;],
- 301 NEITHER OUT FAR NOR IN DEEP: 1st in The Yale Review, Spring 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 9 The land may vary] Some say the land has 1st
- 301 VOICE WAYS: 1st in The Yale Review, Winter 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 302 DESIGN: 1st in American Poetry 1922: A Miscellany (New

- York, 1922); in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 7 like a] like 1st, AFR, 1939, 1946
- 302 On a Bird Singing in Its Sleep: 1st in Scribner's Magazine, December 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 4 (as 1st), ]; 9, ] 11 (as 1st), ] 12 (as 1st),
- 303 AFTERFLAKES: 1st in The Yale Review, Autumn 1934; in 1939, 1949
- 303 CLEAR AND COLDER: 1st in Direction, Autumn 1934; in 1939, 1949; VARIANTS 10 take some leftover] from far reserves of 1st (wherein the succeeding line ends with a comma) 11 to] from 1st 15 Dash it with some] Even dashed with 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a comma); EMENDATIONS 1 (as 1st), 3, 9.)]; 10 leftover] left-over
- 304 UNHARVESTED: 1st as "Ungathered Apples" in The Saturday Review of Literature, November 10, 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS (2 and 3 not in 1st) 4 was] stood 1st (5 not in 1st) 6 And of Of 1st 7 Now breathed as And breathing 1st 8 For And 1st 12 May much stay Much, much stays 1st 14 So To 1st
- 305 There Are Roughly Zones: in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 13?].
- 306 A TRIAL RUN: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, June 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANT 13 sets] set 1st; EMENDATIONS 7 thunderclap] thunder-clap 8,]
- 306 NOT QUITE SOCIAL: 1st in The Saturday Review of Literature, March 30, 1935; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 4,] 10 loosely,] loosely 16 death tax death-tax
- 307 Provide, Provide: 1st in The New Frontier, September 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; variant 17 Atones] Makes up 1st; EMENDATIONS 2 rag] rag, 13,]; 17 (as 1st) disregard] disregard,
- 308 TEN MILLS: collective title for ten poems which first appeared as a group in *Poetry*, April 1936, wherein "The Wrights' Biplane" and "One Guess" were not, however, included, there being present there instead two couplets, "Assertive" and "Ring Around."

When AFR was published "Ring Around" (subsequently re-titled "The Secret Sits" and incorporated in AWT) was eliminated, "The Wrights' Biplane" and "One Guess" were added, and through error "Assertive" was retained, so that the "Ten Mills" group as it appeared in AFR consisted of eleven poems; moreover, the "Assertive" couplet (Let me be the one / To do what is done.) also appeared elsewhere within AFR as lines 260-261 of "Build Soil." The order of the "Ten Mills" in Poetry was "Precaution," "The Span of Life," "Pertinax," "Assertive," "Tendencies Cancel," "Untried," "Money," "Ring Around," "Not All There," "In Dives' Dive." In AFR the order became "Precaution," "The Span of Life," "The Wrights' Biplane," "Assertive," "Evil Tendencies Cancel," "Pertinax," "Waspish," "One Guess," "The Hardship of Accounting," "Not All There," "In Divés' Dive." Both 1939 and 1946 follow AFR, but as collected in 1949 and subsequent editions the "Ten Mills" are—

- 308 I. Precaution: 1st, after incidental newspaper appearance, in *Poetry*, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 308 II. THE SPAN OF LIFE: evidently in a book prior to appearance in *Poetry*, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 308 III. THE WRIGHTS' BIPLANE: in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 308 IV. EVIL TENDENCIES CANCEL: 1st as "Tendencies Cancel" in Poetry, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 1 end] kill 1st 6 end] kill 1st
- 308 V. PERTINAX: 1st in Poetry, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 309 VI. WASPISH: 1st as "Untried" in Poetry, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 1 (as 1st) bent] bent,
- 309 VII. One Guess: in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 3 dyestuff] dye stuff
- 309 VIII. THE HARDSHIP OF ACCOUNTING: 1st as "Money" in Poetry, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 309 IX. NOT ALL THERE: 1st in Poetry, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 6;]

- 310 X. In Divés' Dive: 1st in Poetry, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; variant 2 steady] patient 1st
- **310** THE VINDICTIVES: in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 50,] (A table-of-contents note in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 associates the poem with: The Andes)
- 313 THE BEARER OF EVIL TIDINGS: 1st in The Yale Review, Winter 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANT 11 through the through 1st, AFR; EMENDATION 18,] (A table-of-contents note in AFR, 1939, 1949, and 1955 associates the poem with: The Himalayas)
- 315 IRIS BY NIGHT: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, April 1936; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 belief in] the tale at 1st 6 seen of old] always seen 1st (1st has in place of 16 a line: And unrelieved of any water-weight.); EMENDATIONS 24 (as 1st) went] went, 25 (as 1st)),]) 27 (as 1st) ends] ends, (A table-of-contents note in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 associates the poem with: The Malverns (but these are only hills))
- 316 BUILD SOIL: in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 44—]. (interlinear space entered after 53) 60 livelong live-long 61 yardful] yard full schoolboys school boys 63 hopscotch] hop-scotch 64 leapfrog leap frog —],— 72,] 73,]——], 81,] 86:], 105,] 112 businessman] business man 143,] 145,] 153 god pinxit] God pinxit 155,] 173,] 175,] 176—],— 187 land,] land 214 long, long] long long 215 why,] why 216,] 218,] 225 so] so, 241 (as AFR, 1939).] 262,] 278,] (A table-of-contents note in AFR, 1939, 1949, 1955, and 1963 records: As delivered at Columbia University, May 31, 1932, before the National party conventions of that year)
- 325 To A THINKER: 1st as "To a Thinker in Office" in The Saturday Review of Literature, January 11, 1936; in 1939, 1949; VARIANT 3 One Once 1st; EMENDATIONS 16)]), 23,]
- 326 A MISSIVE MISSILE: 1st in The Yale Review, Autumn 1934; in 1939, 1946, 1949, 1955; VARIANT 1 Someone in Some son of 1st

#### A WITNESS TREE

(New York: Henry Holt, 1942)

Following a page containing two short introductory poems ("Beech" and "Sycamore"), the contents of A Witness Tree was arranged in five sections: One or Two (including "The Silken Tent" through "The Discovery of the Madeiras"), Two or More ("The Gift Outright" through "The Lesson for Today"), Time Out (the poem of that title through "It Is Almost the Year Two Thousand"), Quantula ("In a Poem" through "An Answer"), and Over Back (being the last six poems of the book).

Besides the regular trade edition, a limited edition of seven hundred and thirty-five numbered copies, signed by RF, was issued.

The book was dedicated: TO K.M. FOR HER PART IN IT

- 331 BEECH: in 1946, 1949, 1963
- 331 SYCAMORE: in 1946, 1949, 1963
- 331 THE SILKEN TENT: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, Winter 1939; in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 332 ALL REVELATION: 1st as "Geode" in The Yale Review, Spring 1938; in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 3 Or] And 1st 4 that] what 1st 9 A] One 1st 13 crystals] crystal 1st
- 333 HAPPINESS MAKES UP IN HEIGHT FOR WHAT IT LACKS IN LENGTH: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, September 1938; in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 16 swept] went 1st 22 its] the 1st; EMENDATIONS 10] Oh, (as 1st) stormy, stormy 15 (as 1st) dawn] dawn,
- 334 COME IN: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, February 1941; in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 334 I COULD GIVE ALL TO TIME: 1st in The Yale Review, Autumn 1941; in 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 12 held] thought 1st
- 335 CARPE DIEM: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, September 1938; in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 336 THE WIND AND THE RAIN: in 1946, 1949; EMENDATIONS 4,] 19,] 30 onto] on to 33 flood] flood, 34,]

- 338 THE MOST OF IT: in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 12-]
- 338 Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same: in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 339 THE SUBVERTED FLOWER: in 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 12 fingertips finger tips 24 ——] 72 comb,] comb
- 341 WILLFUL HOMING: 1st in The Saturday Review of Literature, February 26, 1938, within Louis Untermeyer's "Play in Poetry" (condensed from his then forthcoming book of that title); in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 1 getting dark] growing late 1st 3 storm] snow 1st an icy] a chilly 1st 7 a course] his course 1st 11 knob] latch 1st; EMENDATION 7 (as 1st),]
- 342 A CLOUD SHADOW: in 1946, 1949, 1963
- 342 THE QUEST OF THE PURPLE-FRINGED: 1st as "The Quest of the Orchis" in The Independent, June 27, 1901; in 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANTS 2 overhead] o'erhead 1st 9 to be before the scythe] before the scythes should come 1st 13 him] that 1st 18 Nor] Or 1st 24 That were pale] Pale 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a comma) 25 silently] silent 1st
- 343 THE DISCOVERY OF THE MADEIRAS: in 1949; EMENDATIONS Subtitle Hakluyt] HACKLUYT 7, 21; , 28 staves] staves, 40 headshakings] head shakings 48, 77. , 95, 97 All] 'All right, right !]!' (interlinear space entered after 97)
- 348 THE GIFT OUTRIGHT: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, Spring 1942; in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963 (appended to "For John F. Kennedy His Inauguration"); VARIANTS 9 found out that] found 1st, AWT, 1946 16 would] might 1st (A table-of-contents note in AWT and 1949 records: Read before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at William and Mary College, December 5, 1941.)
- 348 TRIPLE BRONZE: 1st in booklet form, as Triple Plate, being RF's 1939 Christmas poem; in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 349 OUR HOLD ON THE PLANET: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1940 Christmas poem; in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS
  3 And blow a gale. It didn't] It didn't blow a gale and 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a period) 5 And just because] It didn't,

- because 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a period) 11 to] and 1st 15 And it must be] It must be just 1st (17 in 1st appeared as the thirteenth line therein, with variant phrasing: The number of people alive has been steadily more.) 18 Our] Or our 1st; EMENDATIONS 9 (as 1st), 16 (as 1st) percent] per cent
- 349 To A Young Wretch: 1st, without subtitle, in booklet form, being RF's 1937 Christmas poem; in 1946, 1949, 1963; Variants 9 meant] been 1st 15 opposing] conflicting 1st; Emendations 14 where, thus,] where thus 19 rope] rope, 20 tree,] tree (as 1st) bay,] bay (Also in The Saturday Review of Literature for December 25, 1937.)
- 350 THE LESSON FOR TODAY: in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 64 go] get AWT, 1946; EMENDATIONS 5 in] in, 37, 40 agape] agape, 85 eheu] Eheu 96 Memento mori Memento mori 139,] 157 Memento Mori] Memento Mori (A table-of-contents note in AWT and 1949 and a footnote in 1963 record: Read before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard University, June 20, 1941.)
- 355 TIME OUT: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, Spring 1942; in 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 5 goldthread] gold-thread Maianthemum] maianthemum 13,] (A table-of-contents note in AWT and 1949 and a footnote in 1963 record: Read before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at William and Mary College, December 5, 1941.)
- 356 To a Moth Seen in Winter: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, Spring 1942; in 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 13,]
- 21-] (A table-of-contents note in AWT and 1949 records: Read before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at William and Mary College, December 5, 1941. A note at the end of the poem in 1st, AWT, 1946, 1949, and 1963 dates the poem: Circa 1900)
- 357 A CONSIDERABLE SPECK: 1st, without subtitle, in The Atlantic Monthly, July 1939; in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 14 loathing] horror 1st 25 Collectivistic regimenting] Political collectivistic 1st 31 when] where 1st; EMENDATION 5 (as 1st),]
- 358 THE LOST FOLLOWER: 1st in The Boston Herald, September

- 13, 1936; in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 us] them 1st 6 we] they 1st 7 No] Not 1st 9 loss] less 1st 10 the] an 1st 11 Some turn] Youth turns 1st 25 such] him 1st 26 a playful moment] playful moments 1st 30 or] and 1st; EMENDATIONS 1 (as 1st), ] 13 shortcut] short cut 21 (as 1st) Muse] muse 23, ] 31 (as 1st) booklike] book-like 32 godlike] god-like 34 (as 1st) eye] eye,
- 359 NOVEMBER: 1st as "October" in The Old Farmer's Almanac 1939 (Boston, 1938); in 1946, 1949, 1963 (A note in AWT, 1946, 1949, and 1963 dates the poem: 1938)
- **360** THE RABBIT-HUNTER: in 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATION Title-]
- 360 A Loose Mountain: in 1946, 1949, 1955
- 361 It Is Almost the Year Two Thousand: in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 13 deluxe de luxe
- 362 In a Poem: in 1949, 1963; emendation 1 way] way,
- 362 On Our Sympathy with the Under Dog: in 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATION 3,]
- 362 A QUESTION: in 1946, 1949, 1963
- 362 BOEOTIAN: in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 362 THE SECRET SITS: 1st as "Ring Around" in Poetry, April 1936 (see note for "Ten Mills"); in 1946, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 363 An Equalizer: in 1949; emendation 4,]
- 363 A SEMI-REVOLUTION: in 1946, 1949, 1963
- 363 Assurance: in 1946, 1949, 1955
- 363 An Answer: in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963
- 364 TRESPASS: 1st in American Prefaces (University of Iowa), April 1939; in 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 8 me a] me AWT, 1946, 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 8 (as 1st) me a] me 10 (as 1st) picture book] picture-book
- 364 A NATURE NOTE: 1st as "A Nature Note On Whippoorwills" in The Coolidge Hill Gazette (Cambridge, Massachusetts, amateur journal), December 1938; in 1946, 1949; variants 12 us] them

- 1st 13 I took note of] But I took note 1st (14 in 1st appeared (ending with a dash) as the fifteenth line and 15 as the fourteenth line therein); EMENDATION 10,]
- 365 OF THE STONES OF THE PLACE: 1st as "Rich in Stones" in The Old Farmer's Almanac 1942 (Dublin, New Hampshire, 1941); in 1946, 1949, 1963; VARIANT 5 one out] one 1st; EMENDATIONS 2 basketful] basket full 15 (as 1st) Gransir] gransir
- 366 Not of School Age: in 1949; emendations 3,] 14 son] son, 25:], (A note in AWT and 1949 dates the poem: 1932)
- 367 A SERIOUS STEP LIGHTLY TAKEN: in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 10 car] car,
- 368 THE LITERATE FARMER AND THE PLANET VENUS: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, March 1941; in 1946, 1949; VARIANTS 56 cóndemned] damnèd 1st 68 you've] you'd 1st; EMENDATIONS 59,] 85 talk] walk 96,] 107 (as 1st, AWT, 1946).] 108 hate] hate,

## STEEPLE BUSH

(New York: Henry Holt, 1947)

The poems in Steeple Bush were set off in five sections: the first seven poems, followed by the "Five Nocturnes" group, then a section titled "A Spire and Belfry" ("A Mood Apart" through "Iota Subscript"), one called "Out and Away" ("The Middleness of the Road" through "Lucretius versus the Lake Poets"), and another designated "Editorials" (being the final twelve poems).

Dedication: FOR PRESCOTT • JOHN • ELINOR • LESLEY LEE [•] ROBIN AND HAROLD

The limited Steeple Bush, signed by the author and numbered, consisted of seven hundred and fifty-one copies.

- 375 A YOUNG BIRCH: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1946 Christmas poem; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 20 reading books] sick in bed 1st, SB
- 375 SOMETHING FOR HOPE: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly,

- December 1946; in 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 12 with] in 1st 22 some things SB; EMENDATIONS 1, 2, ] meadowsweet] meadow sweet 3, ] 6, ] 7 meadowsweet] meadow sweet 18-] 24 (as 1st) spes alit agricolam] spes alit agricolam (A note at the end of SB: PAGE 4 "their wooden rings." Ripton rings.)
- 376 ONE STEP BACKWARD TAKEN: 1st in The Book Collector's Packet, January 1946, within Ray Nash's "Robert Frost and His Printers"; in 1949, 1955, 1963; variants 9 universal] planetary 1st 13 Then] But 1st; EMENDATION 13,]
- 377 DIRECTIVE: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, Winter 1946; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 40 Now left's You see is 1st; EMENDATIONS 15-] 41-]
- 379 Too Anxious for Rivers: in 1949; emendations 9-] 22,]
- 380 AN UNSTAMPED LETTER IN OUR RURAL LETTER BOX: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1944 Christmas poem; in 1949; EMENDATIONS 1,] 8,] 33 (as 1st) lain] lain, 51 in forma pauperis] in forma pauperis
- 382 TO AN ANCIENT: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, December 1946; in 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 9,]
- 382 FIVE NOCTURNES: collective title for five poems, three of which first appeared as a group, under the heading "Nocturnes," in The Yale Review, Autumn 1946—
- 382 I. THE NIGHT LIGHT: 1st in The Yale Review, Autumn 1946; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 383 II. WERE I IN TROUBLE: 1st as "Were I in Trouble with Night Tonight" in The Yale Review, Autumn 1946; in 1949, 1963; EMENDATION 4,]
- 383 III. Bravado: 1st as "Bravery" in The Yale Review, Autumn 1946; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 383 IV. On MAKING CERTAIN ANYTHING HAS HAPPENED: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1945 Christmas poem; in 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANT 3 part] duty 1st; EMENDATIONS 2,] 12,]

- 384 V. In the Long Night: 1st in Dartmouth in Portrait 1944 (Dartmouth College calendar: Hanover, 1943); in 1949, 1963; VARIANT 7 We would crawl out filing Or would file out crawling 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a semicolon); EMENDATIONS 1, 2, (A note at the end of SB: PAGE 21 Etookashoo and Couldlooktoo who accompanied Dr. Cook to the North Pole.)
- 385 A MOOD APART: 1st, without title, (following an incidental, unauthorized appearance in an auction catalogue) in Fifty Years of Robert Frost, edited by Ray Nash (Dartmouth College Library exhibition catalogue: Hanover, 1944); in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 1 to] to some 1st 4 But] Till 1st 8 mood] state 1st; EMENDATION 8 onto] on to
- 385 THE FEAR OF GOD: in 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 10,]
  11 surface] surface, (A note at the end of SB: PAGE 26 The
  Fear of God-Acknowledgment to the Papyrus Prisse)
- 386 THE FEAR OF MAN: in 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 5 in-toppling intoppling 8,] 11 streetlights] street lights ,] 12-]
- 386 A STEEPLE ON THE HOUSE: in 1949, 1955, 1963
- 386 Innate Helium: in 1949
- 387 The Courage to Be New: initial two stanzas 1st as "1946" in separate form, being a broadside printed for the dedication services of Orris C. Manning Memorial Park, Ripton, Vermont, July 28, 1946; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 6 (as 1st),] (A note at the end of SB: PAGE 30 The Courage to Be New[:]/No one cavils at their killing / And being killed for speed. / Then why be so unwilling / They should do as much for creed?)
- 387 IOTA SUBSCRIPT: in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 388 THE MIDDLENESS OF THE ROAD: 1st in The Virginia Quarterly Review, Winter 1946; in 1949, 1955, 1963
- 388 ASTROMETAPHYSICAL: Ist in The Virginia Quarterly Review, Winter 1946; in 1949; VARIANTS 13 It may not give me] I should not dare to 1st 19 it] you 1st; EMENDATIONS 1 Your] your 10 You] you 11,]
- 389 SKEPTIC: in 1949, 1963

- 390 Two Leading Lights: 1st in 1944 Christmas booklet of Earle J. Bernheimer (California collector); in 1949; variants 20 set] try 1st 23 Comparison is not] Not power and glory are 1st (1st has following 23 two lines: She doesnt hope to shine him down, / Or take away from his renown.) 24 his] the 1st 25 That changes winter into] He turns to summon in the 1st; EMENDATIONS 16 (as 1st),] 19,] 20,]
- 391 A ROGERS GROUP: Ist in The Atlantic Monthly, December 1946; in 1949, 1963
- 391 On Being Idolized: in 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATION 4,]
- 391 A Wish to Comply: in 1949
- 392 A CLIFF DWELLING: in 1949, 1963; EMENDATION 10,]
- 392 IT BIDS PRETTY FAIR: in 1949, 1955, 1963
- 393 Beyond Words: in 1949, 1955; EMENDATION 3....]...
- 393 A Case for Jefferson: in 1949, 1955, 1963
- 393 Lucretius versus the Lake Poets: in 1949; emendations 2,] 4 let's Let's
- 394 HAEC FABULA DOCET: Ist in The Atlantic Monthly,
  December 1946; in 1949, 1955; VARIANT (1st has following 20 four
  lines headed VARIANTLY, being the same quatrain as cited in the note
  in SB quoted below, except that the first and third lines end with
  commas); EMENDATIONS 8 (as 1st) overanxious] over anxious
  9 command] command, 17 is,] is (A note at the end of SB:
  PAGE 51 Haec Fabula Docet-Alternatively[:] / The Moral is it
  hardly need be shown / All those who try to go it sole alone, / Or
  with the independence of Vermont / Are absolutely sure to come
  to want.)
- 394 ETHEREALIZING: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, April 1947; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963
- 395 WHY WAIT FOR SCIENCE: 1st as "Our Getaway" in The New Hampshire Troubadour, November 1946; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 5 out. Will she be asked to] out; and to

- what better 1st 6 Us how by rocket we may hope] By whose space-rocket we expect 1st 7 To some star off there, say, a half] A distance of not less than one 1st; EMENDATIONS 1 Science,] Science 7,]
- 396 Any Size We Please: in 1949; emendations 1;], 2 So,] So 7 saying] saying, Hell,] Hell 9,]
- 396 AN IMPORTER: 1st as "The Importer" in The Atlantic Monthly, April 1947; in 1949, 1955; EMENDATIONS 10—]; 14 papers] papers, 24-]
- 397 THE PLANNERS: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, December 1946; in 1949, 1955, 1963
- 398 No Holy Wars for Them: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, April 1947; in 1949, 1955, 1963; EMENDATIONS 3 they, the great, they the great 9 You] you 10 Your] your
- 398 Bursting Rapture: in 1949; emendations 9 was,] was 10,]
- 399 U. S. 1946 KING'S X: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly,
  December 1946; in 1949, 1963; EMENDATION 4 anymore] any more
  (A note at the end of SB: PAGE 59 US 1946 King'S X—Recent
  Riptonian)
- 399 THE INGENUITIES OF DEBT: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, December 1946; in 1949, 1963; EMENDATIONS 4 TAKE CARE TO SELL YOUR HORSE BEFORE HE DIES] 'Take Care to Sell Your Horse before He Dies 5 THE ART OF LIFE IS PASSING LOSSES ON.] The Art of Life Is Passing Losses on.' 9;], (A note at the end of SB: PAGE 60 The Ingenuities of Debt-PreFranconian)
- 399 THE BROKEN DROUGHT: 1st as "But He Meant It" in The Atlantic Monthly, April 1947; in 1949, 1955; VARIANT 13 that] the 1st; EMENDATIONS 3,]
- 400 To The Right Person: 1st, with the subtitle "Fourteen Lines," in The Atlantic Monthly, October 1946, at the end of RF's "The Constant Symbol" (the introductory essay for his then forthcoming Modern Library edition, The Poems); in 1946, 1949, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS 3 much as] much for 1946 10 learning knowledge 1st, 1946; EMENDATIONS 8 (as 1st, 1946) -] 11 anymore] any more (as 1st, 1946),

### "An Afterword" from COMPLETE POEMS (New York: Henry Holt, 1949)

Following the text of Steeple Bush, and before that of A Masque of Reason and A Masque of Mercy, Complete Poems carried a section entitled "An Afterword," consisting of three poems: "Choose Something Like a Star" (the title of which was, as noted below, subsequently changed to "Take Something Like a Star"), "Closed for Good," and "From Plane to Plane." The second of these was in 1962 incorporated by RF as part of the contents of In the Clearing, and within the present volume the remaining two are included under the designation that was originally associated with all three poems in Complete Poems.

403 TAKE SOMETHING LIKE A STAR: 1st as "Choose Something Like a Star" in RF's Come In and Other Poems (New York, 1943), compiled by Louis Untermeyer; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS Title Take] Choose 1st, 1949, 1954, 1955 24 take] choose 1st, 1949, 1954, 1955; EMENDATIONS Title (as 1963) Take] Choose 24 (as 1963) take] choose

404 FROM PLANE TO PLANE: 1st in What's New (Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, Illinois), December 1948; in 1949; VARIANTS 10 is 1st 41 your hoe up] up your hoe 1st 147 believe it] believe 1st; EMENDATIONS 24—] 25;], 72"] 74"] 77 conscience,] conscience 85 someday] some day 103,] 148,] Pike] Pike,

#### IN THE CLEARING

(New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962)

The contents of In the Clearing was preceded, as an introductory element, by an excerpt from the poem "Kitty Hawk" (being lines 219-224 and 246-257, set without any indication of a break between the two segments and having one textual variation: Is for Was in line 254). The book had two titled units: Cluster of Faith (the five poems "Accidentally on Purpose" through that beginning "Forgive, O Lord") and Quandary (being the last ten poems of the volume).

Dedication: Letters in prose to Louis Untermeyer, Sidney Cox, and John Bartlett for them to dispose of as they please; these to you in verse for keeps

The limited In the Clearing, totaling fifteen hundred numbered copies, was signed by RF.

- 411 Pod of the Milkweed: 1st as From a Milkweed Pod in booklet form, being RF's 1954 Christmas poem; in 1963; EMENDATIONS 32-] 34-] 35,] 36,] 39 windowpane] window pane (A note from the end of 54 in 1st, ITC, and 1963: And shall be in due course.)
- 412 Away!: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1958 Christmas poem; in 1963; variant 19 urge] words 1st; emendations 20 "] "]
- 413 A CABIN IN THE CLEARING: 1st, without dedication, in booklet form, being RF's 1951 Christmas poem; in 1963; VARIANT 29 who] who 1st; EMENDATIONS (periods entered after designation of speakers, as in 1963) 15,] 42?].
- 415 CLOSED FOR GOOD: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1948 Christmas poem; in 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963; VARIANTS (1 through 6 not in ITC) 7 And] They ITC 24 brush] spread ITC (1st, 1949, 1954, and 1955 have following 30 an additional stanza: How often is the case / I thus pay men a debt / For having left a place / And still do not forget / To pay them some sweet share / For having once been there.); EMENDATIONS (1 through 6 restored, as in 1st, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963) 7 (as 1st, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963) And] They 24 (as 1st, 1949, 1954, 1955, 1963) brush] spread
- 416 AMERICA IS HARD TO SEE: 1st as "And All We Call American" in The Atlantic Monthly, June 1951; in 1963; VARIANTS 6 to] for 1st 12 venture] future 1st 23 And] But 1st 31 Valladolid] them in Madrid 1st 33 chance] way 1st 48 for] as 1st; EMENDATIONS 20 da] Da 27 da] Da 43-] 47,] 55 Someday] Some day
- 419 ONE MORE BREVITY: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1953 Christmas poem; variants 38 baffled] puzzled 1st 42 him in] him 1st 45 was at] went to 1st 46 With an air that said] As much as to say 1st 47 feel] be 1st 64 having depended on him] profiting by his virtue 1st 65 And yet done nothing] Yet doing so little 1st 69 wasn't disposed] was indisposed 1st; EMENDATIONS

5 watchdog] watch-dog 24;], 38,] 39 (as 1st) fancy] fancy, 40—], 56,] 59 (as 1st),] 60—], 61—], (A note from the end of 65 in 1st and ITC: But see "The Great Overdog" and "Choose Something Like a Star," in which latter the star could hardly have been a planet since fixity is of the essence of the piece.)

421 ESCAPIST—NEVER: 1st in The Massachusetts Review, Winter 1962; VARIANTS 10 pursuit forever.] pursuit 1st (1st has following 10 a line: Of a pursuit of a pursuit forever.)

422 For John F. Kennedy His Inauguration: 1st in newspapers immediately following President Kennedy's Inauguration of Ianuary 20, 1961—variously titled in the press but thereafter, in a special book appearance, called "Dedication" with the present title as a sub-element of that designation; in 1963; VARIANTS ought] for us all 1st 4 Today] This day 1st 7 verse that in acknowledgment] tribute verse to be his own 1st (8 through 10 not in 1st) (11 through 18 at a different point in 1st, as noted below) 19 Now came on a] Is about the 1st 20 our] the 1st (21 and 22 not in 1st) 24 heroes] sages 1st 25 I mean the great four,] (The mighty four of them were 1st, wherein the succeeding line ends with a close parenthesis 27 knew | saw 1st 28 ahead what now appears: ] how in two hundred years 1st 29 empires down] down the world 1st 30 And by By 1st, wherein the line ends with a period 31 Make everybody] It made the least tribe 1st (1st has following 31 three lines, the first being a slight variant of 39 of ITC: New order of the ages did they say? / The newest thing in which they led the way / Is in our very papers of the day. Ist thereafter has 11 through 18 of ITC, four lines of which include variants of ITC readings: 13 What] Which 1st 14 by native] and native 1st 15 The new world Christopher Columbus] What Christopher Columbus first had 1st 17 And counted out. Heroic] They all were counted out: the 1st, wherein the preceding line ends with a comma followed in 1st by seven lines, the fourth, fifth, and sixth being variants of 41, 42, and 45 of ITC: Of what had been for centuries the trend / This turned out the beginning of the end. / My verse purports to be the guiding chart / To the o'erturning it was ours to start / And in it have no unimportant part. / The turbulence we're in the middle of / Is something we can hardly help but love.)

- (32 through 48 not in 1st, except for variants of 39, 41, 42, and 45, as noted above) (54 through 77 not in 1st, which ends with a line-following 53-which does not appear in ITC: I sometimes think that all we ask is glory.); EMENDATIONS 23 His] his 24—], 26—],— 28:], (The text of "The Gift Outright" which was released to accompany the 1st of RF's Inaugural dedicatory verse contained an error in the eighth line, made reading left therein. Also, in saying the poem at the Inauguration RF substituted, at Mr. Kennedy's request, will for would in the final line.) (Following 1st, the dedicatory poem had several appearances in print, including revised and extended versions, prior to ITC.)
- 425 ACCIDENTALLY ON PURPOSE: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1960 Christmas poem; variant 13 Never] Don't you 1st; EMENDATION 7,]
- 426 A Never Naught Song: in 1963; emendations 12,] 26 Yggdrasil] Yggdrasil
- 427 Version: incomplete as included in *ITC*, the poem as given in the present collection is based upon the texts of several variant holographs, particularly one within a copy of *ITC* in the Trinity College Library, Hartford, Connecticut (inscribed: "Version" corrected / R.F. / for Bacon Collamore); the ninth, tenth, and thirteenth through sixteenth lines have been drawn from manuscript and have been styled editorially to make them consistent with the handling of the text as published in *ITC*; in addition there are the following emendations 1,] 8 non-existence] non-existence, 11 (as RF-Collamore MS) the] His 12 (as RF-Collamore MS) her] its ,].
- 427 A CONCEPT SELF-CONCEIVED: in 1963
- 428 [Forgive, O Lord . . .]: 1st as "The Preacher" in RF's A Remembrance Collection of New Poems (New York, 1959); in 1963
- 428 KITTY HAWK: 1st, with the subtitle date 1894, in booklet form, being RF's 1956 Christmas poem; in 1963; VARIANTS (3 not in 1st) 4 Emblematic] A prophetic 1st (7 and 8 not in 1st) (1st has following 9 four lines: It was then as though / I could hardly wait / To degravitate. / Habit couldn't hold me.) 14 think] say 1st (1st, wherein the preceding line ends with a

period, has in place of 17 through 99 sixteen lines, the fourth, sixth, seventh, eighth, tenth, and thirteenth relating to 40, 46, 47, 49, 41, and 99 respectively in ITC: Still I must have known, / Something in me told me, / Flight would first be flown, / It is on my tongue / To say first be sprung, / Into the sublime / Off these sands of time / For his hour glass. / I felt in me wing / To have up and flung / An immortal fling. / I might well have soared, / I might well have sung, / Though my bent was toward / Little more, alas, / Than Cape Hatteras;) 100 I fell in] And I fell 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a semicolon) 105 Or] And 1st (106 and 107 not in 1st) 114 But their lack Being out 1st (1st, wherein the preceding line ends with a semicolon, has following 119 one line: Even at their height) 129 Something All which 1st 132 themselves] someone Ist 163 the] our 1st 169 I aptly] right there I 1st (wherein the preceding line ends with a comma) (1st, wherein the preceding line ends with a comma, has following 169 two lines: That old laurel-crowned / Lord of a John Bull.) 170 And its] The Moon's 1st (175 not in 1st, at this point) 179 upon] twice on 1st (180 not in 1st) (1st, wherein the preceding line ends with a colon, has 181 and 182 transposed in order, slightly altered textually, and followed by thirteen lines, thus bringing the poem therein to an end as follows: For a daughter drowned, / For a son astray. / Kitty Hawk, O Kitty, / Know you no dismay, / But some time in some / Mood akin to pity / You would weep no less / For mankind's success / Than for their distress. / You'd be overcome / In the deathless scene / When that common scoff, / Poor Darius Green, / And his fool machine / Finally took off.); EMENDATIONS 19-] 44—] own]own— 69 overlong] over long 115 (as 1st),] 190 Someday] Some day 199 aliquid 236 -] 258,] 259,] 265 whom] whom— 269)—].) 273 is,] is 274 someday] some day 290 Athens, Rome, France,] Athens Rome France 291 -] 293 so-long-kept] so-long kept 305 inscription,] inscription 329,] 331,] 337,] 373,] 422,] 423,] 431-] 445,] 468,] 471 hometown] home (As noted above, lines 219 through 224 and 246 through 257, with one textual variant, appear in ITC as a frontispiece following the dedication page.) (Following 1st, a revised and greatly extended version, consisting of four hundred and thirty-two lines, appeared in The Atlantic Monthly, November 1957.)

- 443 Auspex: 1st in Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant's Robert Frost:
  The Trial by Existence (New York, 1960); variants 1 California]
  Californian 1st 4 its] his 1st 7 I was] I'd been 1st 9 unto Jove]
  to the gods 1st 10 remained resentful to this] resented ever since
  that 1st; emendations 2, 3 all, all
- 443 The Draft Horse
- 444 Ends: in 1963
- 445 PERIL OF HOPE: in 1963; VARIANTS 5 boughs are] orchard's ITC 7 pink and] all that's ITC; EMENDATIONS 5 (as 1963) boughs are] orchard's 7 (as 1963) pink and] all that's (An evidently incidental publication of a holograph draft of "Peril of Hope" appeared in The Agnes Scott News (Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Georgia), February 8, 1961.)
- 445 QUESTIONING FACES: 1st as "Of a Winter Evening" in The Saturday Review, April 12, 1958; in 1963; VARIANT 3 wings straining suddenly aspread] wide wings strained suddenly at spread 1st; EMENDATION 6 windowsill] window sill
- 446 Does No One at All Ever Feel This Way in the Least?: 1st as Does No One But Me at All Ever Feel This Way in the Least in booklet form, being RF's 1952 Christmas poem; VARIANT 29 of you] of you 1st; EMENDATIONS 1 sea,] sea 23,]. 26-] 28,] (A note from the end of 24 in 1st and ITC: At this writing it seems pretty well accepted that any rivers added can only make the sea saltier.) (A note from the end of 31 in 1st and ITC: By King Canute and Lord Byron among others.)
- 447 THE BAD ISLAND—EASTER: 1st in The Times Literary Supplement, September 17, 1954; EMENDATIONS 2, 3, 9, 12 Halfway Half way 26 beruled be-ruled 54,
- 449 Our Doom to Bloom: 1st, without Robinson Jeffers quote, as Doom to Bloom in booklet form, being RF's 1950 Christmas poem; in 1963
- 450 THE OBJECTION TO BEING STEPPED ON: 1st as My Objection to Being Stepped On in booklet form, being RF's 1957 Christmas poem; EMENDATION 4 offense] offence
- 451 A-WISHING WELL: 1st in booklet form, being RF's 1959

Christmas poem; variant 80 someone someone] someone 1st; emendations 3 were,] were 15,] 21,] 28,] 73-]

453 How Hard It Is to Keep from Being King When It's IN YOU AND IN THE SITUATION: 1st in Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Institute of Arts and Letters, Second Series, Number One (1951); VARIANTS 16 Bellatrix, or else] Bellaterix, or 1st 23 keep] stop 1st 126 had] have 1st 169 here] there 1st 194 freedom's in] freedom is 1st 196 We feel it The only freedom's 1st (202 not in 1st, wherein the preceding line ends with a period and a close quote) 253 at] at the 1st (1st has in place of 275 and 276 one line: It's hard for a king to keep from being a king.) 278 Or more than half I'm half] Exactly half I am 1st; EMENDATIONS 8 on,] on 26;], (interlinear space entered after 29 as in 1st) 32 marketplace] market place 37 marketplace] market place 54 dishwashing] dish-washing 57 (as 1st).)]) (interlinear space entered after 62 as in 1st) 84 me." And me"-and 88 (as 1st) quintessence quintessence 98,] 106 someday] some day 109 Kings] kings 111—] – 118 King] king 123,] 185:], 188 (as 1st) scholar | Scholar | 214 meter | metre | 216 meter | metre | 219 meter] metre 221 verse, so called,] verse so called 234:]; 247,] (251 through 253 in roman, as in 1st, rather than italic) 252 His] his 253 He] he 268 Sirius] Sirius, 270, 275 King] king

462 LINES WRITTEN IN DEJECTION ON THE EVE OF GREAT SUCCESS: 1st, without the five "Postscript" stanzas, in RF's A Remembrance Collection of New Poems (New York, 1959); in 1963; VARIANTS Title of Great] of 1st (as noted, 9-28 and titling thereof not in 1st); EMENDATION 2 (as 1st) onto] on to

464 THE MILKY WAY IS A COWPATH: EMENDATIONS 9 Quidnuncs ] Quidnuncs 22, ] 23, ] 41,

465 Some Science Fiction: 1st, without the concluding quatrain and its titling, in booklet form, being RF's 1955 Christmas poem; variants 11 With] And with 1st 12 For me as an] Call me the 1st 17 around] round 1st 20 unheretical] permissible 1st 23 thinking of] thinking 1st 24 Establishing] Of establishing 1st 28 noble] social 1st 29 wastrel] convict 1st 30 accursed] accurst

.**u** 579

1st; EMENDATION 36 (as early manuscripts and in accordance with a correctness of reference) of ] it's (Dedicatee: Edward Hyde Cox)

467 QUANDARY: 1st, prior to substantial revision, as "Somewhat Dietary" in The Massachusetts Review, Fall 1959; VARIANTS (1 through 6 not in 1st) (7 and 8 are variants of the third and fourth lines of 1st, which therein read: Because discrimination reigns / Is why there's such a need of brains.) (9 is a variant of the first line of 1st, which therein reads: We live but to discriminate) (10 appears as the second line of 1st) (11 through 14 not in 1st) (15 through 18 appear as the fifth through eighth lines of 1st) (19 is a slight variant of the ninth line of 1st, which therein ends without punctuation and is followed by a tenth line not in "Quandary": You want me to confess in ink / I did employ sweetbreads to think) (20 and 21 not in 1st) (22 appears as the eleventh line of 1st, which therein ends with a period and is followed by nine concluding lines not in "Quandary": I wasn't half as much to blame / As was my social science set, / My brothers of the Calumet, / The liberal progressive party / With whom, in being modern-arty, / Sweetbreadsfor-brains, their slogan, had / A vogue amounting to a fad. / To sweetbreads on our club menu / They all ascribed my high I.Q.) (23 through 26 not in 1st)

#### 468 A Reflex

468 In a Glass of Cider: emendation 4,]

468 FROM IRON: 1st (following incidental, newspaper appearance), prefaced by the dedicatory text given below, as "The Sage," in RF's A Remembrance Collection of New Poems (New York, 1959); in 1963; VARIANT (1st has in place of subtitle and dedication six lines: This to the memory of my great friend / Ahmed Bokhari who had me down / from Vermont to view his lump of / purest iron ore at the United Nations / in the room for meditation on / Tools and Weapons.)

469 [Four-Room Shack...]: in 1963

469 [BUT OUTER SPACE . . .]: 1st as "The Astronomer" in RF's A Remembrance Collection of New Poems (New York, 1959); VARIANTS 1 But outer] This Outer 1st 2 this] thus 1st 4

populace] populace 1st 5 Stays] Seems 1st popular] popular 1st 6 populous] populous 1st

469 On Being Chosen Poet of Vermont: 1st, without title, in newspapers immediately following RF's installation on July 22, 1961, as Poet Laureate of Vermont; in 1963; variants 2 When he finds] To know 1st 3 not entirely disapproved] happily more or less approved 1st

469 [WE VAINLY WRESTLE . . .]

470 [IT TAKES ALL SORTS...]: 1st as "The Poet" in RF's A Remembrance Collection of New Poems (New York, 1959); in 1963; VARIANT 1 sorts] kinds 1st; EMENDATION 1-]

470 [IN WINTER IN THE WOODS . . .]: 1st by RF in a holograph facsimile, Amherst College, 1962; in 1963; EMENDATION 5 ax,] axe

#### A MASQUE OF REASON

(New York: Henry Holt, 1945)

The limited edition, signed by the author, totaled eight hundred numbered copies.

473 A MASQUE OF REASON: in 1949, 1963; VARIANT 269 the] a AMOR; EMENDATIONS (periods entered after designation of speakers, as 1963, and such designations, as 1963, given in roman small capitals rather than italic capitals and lower case) 41 letup's let-up's 44 letup] let-up 80 Him] him 84 are] are— 89,] 97 Witch] witch 106—] 116—] 147,] 152—] 184.]. there,] there 208,] 246 long-long-after-thought] long long afterthought 270 - me, then,] me then 281,] 304 mean?] mean. 325,] 328 Chapters] chapters 336—] 337—] 345:], 346 ultrared] ultra red 354,] 358 lookout] look out 370 onto] on to 385 —] 386 —] 392 (as AMOR) here,] here. 398—] 402—] 407,] 408 every which way] everywhichway 420—] 432,] 435—] 436,] 439—] 443 sand, sand 447—] 455, offstage off stage Chapter Forty-three] chapter forty-three

#### A MASQUE OF MERCY

(New York: Henry Holt, 1947)

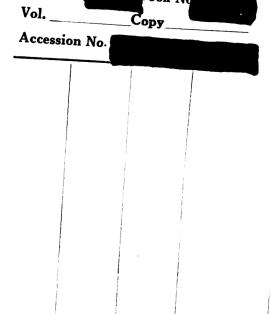
The limited edition of seven hundred and fifty-one numbered copies was signed by RF.

493 A MASQUE OF MERCY: 1st in The Atlantic Monthly, November 1947; in 1949; variants 436 And Now 1st 437 you've vou have 1st; EMENDATIONS (periods entered after designation of speakers, as 1st, and such designations given in roman small capitals rather than italic capitals and lower case) 4 showcase show case 21 "1 "] 33—] 48 (as 1st) Moby Dick Moby Dick 60 you | you 79 —] 84 (as 1st).] 97,] 102 (as 1st, AMOM) do] do, 121 Three,] Three 137—], 138,] —], 139,] 152—] 164—] 170-] 172"] !]. "] (as 1st).] 173—] 175 (as 1st).] 183,] 197.] 199 (as 1st) down.] down 201-] 203 anymore] any more 207 —] 208 home,] home. (as 1st) we] We —] 213 sad,] sad 233 (as 1st).] 238,] 239 (as 1st).] 246 (as 1st).] 252,] 263 ——] — 269 place,] place 270,] 276 (as 1st) The New Yorker] THE NEW YORKER 282 showcase] show case 285 —] 287 (as 1st).] 296,] 311,] 318,] 321,] 322,] 324.] 331:]. 341 (as 1st) down.] down 344 (as 1st).] 345—] 346—] 349,] 352;], 356,] 369-] 376,] 379 justice] justice, 381 (as 1st) —], 393 (as 1st) another.] another 403 —] 406 (as 1st) small-time] smalltime —] 421 (as 1st) again] again. 428, 429, 430, 437, 439 (as 1st).], 448 well,] well 459 Væ Victis] Vae Victis 462,] 463 -] 469,] 470,] 490 (as 1st).] 492 (as 1st, AMOM).] 496, 498 (as 1st) it, it 504, . 509, 511 — 518 — 521,] 539 (as 1st) -] 540,] 541,] 550 (as 1st).] 555—] 562 (as 1st), 563, 569, 570, 590, 607 (as 1st) O'Neill] O'Neil 609, 610, 619, 643, 653 (as 1st).] 657 though,] though 665 (as 1st).] 668 (as 1st).] 669,] "Too] too ,] "] 671,] (as 1st).] 672—] 673 (as 1st) fall.] fall ...] - 674 -..], 675 -...] - 676,] 683 (as 1st).] 684 —] 691 (as 1st).] 692,] —] 696 (as 1st).] 718 —], 721 —], 735 (as 1st) -] 737 (as 1st).]

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